

# The Rosary: Its History and Meaning



by Father Franz Michel Willam

# Foreword

Part one of this book presents the first complete history of the origin and development of the rosary. This prayer has grown like a spreading shrub. Springing up lush and green in the spiritual soil of the Irish-British homeland, it extended to the continent. In Central Europe it blossomed forth in mysteries which finally attained perfection of form and number in Southern Europe.

Part two is the story of the significance of the rosary in the light of its history. The great teachers are invoked as witnesses: they explain the nature of the prayer and tell of the various helps offered the faithful for the right understanding and proper practice of the devotion. Especially profitable for the aid and guidance of souls are the personal experiences of Saint Louis Grignon de Montfort, canonized on July 20, 1947.

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# **Part One - The Rosary: Its History**

## **Spiritual Sources of the Rosary**

The rosary is like a mighty stream whose waters are drawn from many tributaries. They all have their source in the same spiritual heights - the liturgical prayers of the Church, not as directed to the celebration of the Holy Mass, but as establishing a prayerful relationship to God. For this reason the history of the rosary should begin with a survey of those lofty regions of liturgical prayer. Then, following the course of these sacred streams as they converge to form the rosary, we descend into the valley of the faith.

## **The Liturgical Prayers of the Church. Their Counterpart in the Language of the People. Principal Facts**

Much good may be reported of the period of the rosary's origin, about the year 1000. There was a persistent desire on the part of the simple people to partake with all possible inner devotion in the life of the Church as manifested in the ceremonies of divine worship, principally Holy Mass and the Divine Office recited by the monks. A corresponding will in the Church's leadership directed this desire with an earnest and large-hearted spiritual motive towards the altar and the choir. Quite naturally, short excerpts from the Latin liturgical texts were placed in the hands of the laity. This included primarily the sung parts of the Mass, the Kyrie, the Credo, the Sanctus. Some of the peasants, of course, were not unfamiliar with the Latin of the Penitential Psalms. The laity who worked on the vast monastic lands had the best acquaintance with Latin prayer forms. And on feast days there were countless others - members of the prayer confraternities - who flocked to the monastery churches. By such means many Latin texts were committed to memory. They entered the homes and were passed on to future generations.

The spiritual content of the longer texts, however, could not readily become the possession of the faithful except by translation. In addition to these texts there were others which, though still in Latin, particularly appealed to the popular piety. The most noted instance is the Imitation of Christ. Millions of Christians have read it in their own language, with scarcely a suspicion that the original was Latin, later on cast into the vernacular. But this Latin was totally different in spirit from the hard Roman idiom. Rich and warm, it caught the heart-beat of the people.

As far as the Holy Mass is concerned, a chant was inserted after the Gradual. It was intended to fit the minds and satisfy the hearts of the people. Called the Sequence, that which follows, it set forth the theme of the feast-day Mass in popular rhythmic form which the people could readily grasp and appreciate. The warmth and depth of sentiment of the Sequence is in marked contrast to the austerity

of the liturgical texts. We need note only a few instances to prove our point.

The Alleluia Verse of the great feast of Easter reads: "Christ our Paschal Lamb is sacrificed." The Sequence of this verse is still the proper Sequence recited in the Mass for Easter. In it the joyful and excited dialogue with Mary takes place:

Tell us, Mary, thou our herald be,  
What in passing thou didst see?  
Empty tomb, where Christ, now living, lay,  
Angels saw I in bright array,  
Shroud and vesture loosely cast aside  
Prove clear: He is risen glorified.  
Yea! my hope hath snapped the fatal chain,  
Death has smote and risen again:  
Quick before you, speed to Galilee,  
Christ in glory haste to see.

The Alleluia Verse of the Mass for Pentecost reads as follows: "Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful: and kindle in them the fire of Thy love." The Sequence to this verse is probably the work of the saintly archbishop, Stephen Langton; it begins with the verse:

Holy Spirit, come and shine  
On our souls with beams divine,  
Issuing from Thy radiance bright.

Come, O Father of the poor,  
Ever bounteous of Thy store,  
Come, our heart's unfailing Light.

Come, consoler, kindest, best,  
Come, our bosom's dearest guest,  
Sweet refreshment, sweet repose.

The Alleluia Verse of the feast of Corpus Christi is as follows: "My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed: he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him." Saint Thomas Aquinas composed the Sequence for this verse. In

English translation, the first two stanzas are:

Praise, O Sion, praise thy Saviour,  
Shepherd, Prince, with glad behaviour,  
Praise in hymn and canticle:

Sing His glory without measure,  
For the merit of your Treasure  
Never shall your praises fill.

Wondrous theme of mortal singing,  
Living Bread and Bread life-bringing.  
Sing we on this joyful day:

At the Lord's own table given  
To the twelve as Bread from Heaven,  
Doubting not we firmly say.

Among the sacred hymns sung in all languages by Christians are the *Stabat Mater* and the *Dies Irae*. The former is the Sequence for the feast of the Seven Dolors celebrated on the Friday of Passion Week. It begins with the strophe.

At the Cross her station keeping,  
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
Close to Jesus to the last:

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,  
All His bitter anguish bearing,  
Now at length the sword had passed.

The *Dies Irae* is the Sequence for the Mass of All Souls Day. It might be said to begin with a burst of song:

Day of wrath and doom impending,  
David's word with Sibyl's blending!  
Heaven and earth in ashes ending!

O, what fear man's bosom rendeth,  
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,  
On whose sentence all dependeth!

The Sequences were not the only insertion in the Mass. There were others, bound up with the fixed liturgical text by nature of content and attached to it. Such additions were called tropes. The rhythmic amplifications of the Kyrie were very popular. The following trope is from a Mass of the Blessed Virgin:

Hail to thee, Mother of God, Mary!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
Hail to thee, bright star of the sea!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
Hail to thee, to God's sealed house the portal!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!

To the true Anointed One, the temple thou!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
Christ's own Mother didst deserve to be!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
To be His Mother thou didst consent,  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!

Help those who praise thee lovingly!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
Help all who pray to thee!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
Help all who praise and honor thee!  
Lord, have mercy; have mercy, Lord!  
All who say: Hail to thee!

About five thousand Latin Sequences and tropes are still extant. As time went on, a considerable number of these were cast into verse. In the vernacular they were spread among the faithful.

The canonical hours had also to make way for such rhythmic amplifications. They bore the name *verbeta*, meaning "amplifications." As an example we might cite the amplification of the verse, "Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, who, after the birth, a Virgin didst remain," which is as follows:

Intact, untouched,  
And chaste, thou art, O Mary!  
Mother exalted.



Thou art to Christ most dear!  
Portal resplendent  
For the King,  
Accept our prayer of praise!

These antiphons of the breviary, addressed to the Mother of the Lord, are deserving of special mention. They have an important bearing on the origin of the first and second part of the Hail Mary. The spiritual content of the hymns of the breviary was made the possession of the people through translations in verse. In some instances the entire text of the Office and Mass of a feast was cast into verse in the language of the people. No better way could be found to make the Church's official prayer and her liturgy accessible to the faithful. The entire Mass of the Blessed Virgin, for example, was translated from the Latin and put into vernacular verse by a poet of the twelfth century. It is remarkable that in a period when the masses could neither read nor write, the people often showed great familiarity with these prayers of the Church. There was a grasp of their varied nature and purpose, which seems to elude many people of our day, despite a plethora of printed "texts."

Another element of the utmost importance in the origin of the rosary was the tendency to imitate in popular prayer the chant of the Psalms. These Psalms formed the greater part of the canonical hours and were approved liturgical models for the people to follow in their prayers. Accordingly, our next section will be taken up with this "imitation."

# **The Biblical Psalter in Liturgical Prayer and Its Fourfold Counterpart in the Prayers of the People**

From time immemorial the 150 Psalms of the Bible have comprised the most important part of the canonical hours. Quite naturally there would be some attempt to offer the people a counterpart to the Latin Psalms of these hours. But though the attempt was of supreme importance, it met with the greatest obstacles. The masses were illiterate, and even those who could read were scarcely equal to the Latin text or, for that matter, ever able to purchase a copy of it. To expect the faithful to commit to memory all the Latin Psalms, some of which are quite lengthy, was also too much. Nor could the people be expected to use the complete Psalter in prayer, even in its translated form.

Thus, if a direct use of the Psalms was not possible for the faithful, a substitute had to be found, a series of popular prayers which would be a psalter of the laity. A psalter it was. The old name was retained but given an added meaning. Gradually the word came to mean, over and above the 150 Psalms of the Bible, another series of prayers composed of 150 individual parts. Here we have the beginnings of the rosary. It originated in the effort to find a prayer for the laity corresponding to the Latin Psalter of the canonical hours. At this embryonic stage no one could even suspect what the final development would be - a true counterpart in a psalter of the people, the canonical hours of the laity, the rosary.

## **1. The Psalter of 150 Our Fathers. The Irish-Anglo-Saxon Prayer Directives**

We are well aware that scientific research has peered into practically every conceivable problem. No object seems able to elude scientific inquiry. And yet, even in the periods of most exacting investigation, there was a strange reserve in the matter of the religious life of the lower classes of the people of the European countries: what was the source of its inspiration, and how did the popular prayers arise? We know in great detail the precise

difference between the Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian styles of architecture; but we are at a loss when it comes to a knowledge of the various forms of popular prayer.

Were we as thoroughly acquainted with prayer forms as we are with the Greek architectural styles, we would undoubtedly accord Ireland a pre-eminence in this field similar to that which we accord Greece in the domain of art.

In Ireland, land of saints and men of prayer, the Book of Psalms was held in great esteem from the very beginning. For the Irish monks, this was the song of faith, and the word of prayer. They entered into the spirit of the Psalms with great recollection and with the piety characteristic of utter devotion. Significantly, they had a special name for the Psalter. The 150 Psalms were the *Na tri coicat*, which meant the "three fifties." Here, at two places in this isle of saints, we have the beginnings of our prayer. Its final and complete development is our present-day rosary.

By calling the Book of Psalms the "three fifties," the monks meant that there was a first, a second, and a third "fifty." Such "fifties" were imposed as penances in the sacrament of Penance - frequent reception of this sacrament also derives from Ireland - and they were also recited as prayer for the repose of the souls of the departed. We have an instance in a record from the abbey at Kemble after the year 800, indicating that the members of the monastery were obliged to pray two "fifties," which would mean one hundred Psalms, for the repose of the soul of each departed benefactor. The same practice is indicated for a monastery in Canterbury at about the same time.

The division of the Psalms into three "fifties" was brought to the European mainland by the monks of Columba and Gall and their companions from the Irish homeland. In the centuries intervening between the migration of nations and the time of Charlemagne, it is literally true that Irish was a second ecclesiastical language alongside Latin, with its intellectual influence extending as far as northern Italy. A document dating from the year 800 reveals that the two monasteries of Saint Gall and Reichenau entered into an agreement to form a community of prayer. On the death of any member of either monastery, the priests in both were obliged to

offer a Holy Mass, and the other members to recite a "fifty" for the repose of the soul of the departed. According to a document of Fulda, the monks of the institution addressed a petition to Charlemagne that they be allowed to retain the ancient usage of observing the month's mind of Saint Sturm, the founder, by means of a vigil and the recitation of fifty Psalms; the anniversary, by a vigil and the entire Psalter, or all three "fifties."

But what of the lay Brothers in these monasteries, who knew very little of the Latin language and could not recite the "fifties"? Conceivably there was already at that time an obligation for them to recite specific prayers as a substitute for the Psalms. At any rate we know with certainty that the following prescription was laid down as early as the year 1096: each priest is obliged to offer a Holy Mass for the soul of each departed member. Those who are not priests are to recite fifty Psalms or fifty Our Fathers, which is to say, one Our Father for each Psalm. This gave rise to a new kind of "fifty," a "fifty" of Our Fathers. A unit of fifty Psalms was then called a "*quinquena*" from the Latin word for fifty, *quinquaginta*.

A similar prescription is found in the regulations of the Cistercian Order. Every priest was obliged to offer annually twenty Holy Masses for the deceased members of the Order. Every other member was obliged to recite the Psalter ten times, or the Psalm *Miserere* or the Our Father 1500 times. For a deceased member of his own monastery, each priest had to offer Mass three times, and each lay Brother recite the *Miserere* or the Our Father 150 times. The 150 Our Fathers were equivalent to the 150 Psalms of the Psalter, and each Our Father to an individual Psalm. There was a like regulation in the Order of the Knights Templar. According to the decrees of the Council of Troyes (1128), when a member died, all the members were obliged to pray the Our Father one hundred times daily for a week, the equivalent in Our Fathers of two "fifties" of the Psalter.

Here we have evidence of the practice of dividing the Psalter into three "fifties" and, for the laity, substituting an Our Father for a Psalm. All this played a significant role in the development of the rosary.

Another practice, also from Ireland, contributed to this end. Research by English scholars has revealed three kinds of prayer, not

merely the two usually referred to. In dealing with the history of Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, they distinguish "vocal," "corporeal," and "mental" prayer. The corporeal includes all those old prayer-exercises which were accompanied by various reverences, genuflections, prostrations, striking the breast, and extending the arms. Those exercises were native to the East from earliest times and, among other customs, survive in the prayer exercises of the Mohammedans. Similar practices were followed in the ancient spiritual life of Ireland. Through the Irish, Scotch, and Anglo-Saxon missionaries, they were carried to the Continent.

The bows and genuflections connected with the prayers also had a name of their own in those days. They were called "*veniae*," a term indicating that they were prayers of supplication. The Irish term for the prayers with extended arms was "*Crossfigil*." The ancient documents used the expression "*Kriuzestale*"; such is its correct form, and not "*Kinzeztale*." The meaning is to "pray like a cross," or to assume a cross-like posture by extending the arms. Old Swiss documents speak of this form of prayer as a prayer with "*zertanen Armen*."

It was natural that the laymen who recited, instead of the Latin Psalms, the like number of Our Fathers, should spontaneously fall into the practice of accompanying these Our Fathers with genuflections. In this manner, as our documents show, the custom of combining a certain number of Hail Marys with an equal number of genuflections or bows became quite widespread in the following centuries.

Instances of this Irish form of prayer are found in the life of Saint Patrick, a testimony for its existence and its connection with the Psalms. It is related of the Saint that he divided the night into three parts: the first two devoted to prayer, and the last third to sleep. He spent the time allotted to prayer in such wise as to recite one hundred Psalms, or two "fifties," and to make two hundred genuflections, one at the beginning and one at the end of each Psalm. The last "fifty" he prayed while standing in cold water, with arms extended, in order to keep himself awake and to do penance.

Another practice must be considered in connection with prayers of penance and for the dead. This is the medieval custom of reciting

the entire Scriptural Psalter over and above the regular Office on the days of Holy Week. The Pope practiced this devotion and pious laymen also took it up. Entire Religious Orders imitated the Pontiff, and some of them continue the practice today.

Some smile cynically, and others affect to be shocked at the mention of such a form of prayer. But in all honesty we should take a different attitude by making a personal study of the matter, and by actually trying out this form of prayer. Men who boast of the spirit of independent investigations and research should welcome such a procedure as a matter of course. The trial in most instances would lead to one of two results: either we would abruptly drop the practice after a very short time, or we would reflect much more vividly than was our wont on the Divine Presence which impels to reverence and the spirit of prayer. From such sentiment towards God did this corporeal prayer arise. It should in turn lead those who practice it back to God.

This kind of prayer has not been altogether lost among lay people, for it has been practiced privately down to our own time. Even today there are still some families that, in time of great trial, pray with outstretched arms. Up to a generation ago it was customary in Lower Austria for the people to walk outdoors at noon on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, turn south toward Rome, and recite the Angelus with outstretched arms, in order to receive the blessing of the Holy Father.

Transition from the corporeal forms to the most ancient forms of recitation of the Psalter was easy: a substitution of the fifty Our Fathers for fifty Psalms, 100 Our Fathers for 100 Psalms, 150 Our Fathers for 150 Psalms - dissociation of the prayer from the occasions of Confession or the death of a fellow Religious - establishing the practice of reciting fifty or 100 or 150 Our Fathers daily - and we have a prayer which corresponds, in a fashion, to the recitation of one or two or three parts of the rosary.

Today the rosary is divided according to the three sets of Mysteries - Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. Each consists of fifty Hail Marys. This division is derived from the Irish practice of dividing the Davidic Psalter. It comes to the rosary, not directly, but only through this Irish custom of dividing the Psalms of the Bible.

The custom of counting the Our Fathers and other short prayers on strings was prevalent long before the time of Saint Dominic. There is documentary evidence of such a practice at Isny in Algau (Wurttemberg) in the year 1151. It is concerned with litigation over an inheritance. Settlement of the dispute depended on whether the "counting string," the "counter," was to be considered personal property of the deceased the same as knives and forks; or real property, as beds and chairs. The question was settled by determining that the "counters," like knives and forks, which every one owned, were to be considered personal property of the deceased. In the *Saxon Mirror* (*Sachsenspiegel*), a manual of law, composed about two generations later, a similar decision is recorded. A widow is granted the right to take her Pater Noster counter along with her as inheritance.

In popular speech down to our own day, certain expressions are still current which call to mind the time when men originally used the counting string to number the Our Fathers. The string of beads is still called in some countries "*Noster*" or "*Nuster*" and likewise "*Päter*."

## **2. The Psalter of 150 Aves. History of the Hail Mary**

In the course of time another psalter came to be associated with the psalter of the 150 Our Fathers. It consisted of 150 Hail Marys in the formula then current.

The Hail Mary has its own history. A part of the rosary prayer, like the rosary itself, it developed in the people's own language through the popular imitation of the pattern of liturgical prayer.

The words of the angel: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," were spontaneously united with the words which Elizabeth addressed to Mary: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." In the liturgy the two greetings were united already about the year 600 in the Offertory prayer of the Mass for the last Sunday of Advent, a Marian Sunday.

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As to the further development of this prayer, a legend in the works

of Saint Peter Damian (died 1072) offers as much information as we can obtain from that early period. The Saint relates the following story: A certain cleric, who had wandered far from the holiness of life required in his state, still continued the good practice of praying daily to Mary. He would sing before her image the words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." When the income of his benefice was taken from him because of his unclerical manner of life, the Mother of God appeared to his bishop and had him reinstated so that he could have some means of subsistence. To this legend Saint Peter Damian adds the following practical application: "This man repeated the one little verse taken from the lips of the angel, as mentioned in the Gospel: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,' and received as his reward his bodily subsistence. With what confidence may they look forward to an eternal reward who daily recite the prayers at all hours in honor of the blessed Queen of Heaven!"

In this practical application Saint Peter Damian contrasts the brief prayer of the cleric with the recitation of the Hours in honor of the Mother of God. We grasp its significance only when we bear in mind that the prayer of the cleric is found also in the Little Office of Mary. The words, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women," and likewise the words, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," are a part of the daily Hours said in her honor. Indeed, as the Saint points out, they form only an insignificant portion of these Hours.

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The Saturday Office in honor of the Blessed Virgin, which has come down to us unchanged from this period, also contains the first part of this prayer, which serves as a solemn introduction to it: "Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee," while the other part, "blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," is used as an Antiphon at Vespers and Lauds.

It should be noted that the Marian Office recited in the monastery at Fonte Avellana, to which Peter Damian belonged, had the very same elements: the greeting of the angel Gabriel to Mary (Hail, full



of grace, etc.), and the salutation of Elizabeth. A collection of manuscripts in London also contains the Little Hours in honor of Mary, dating from this century. They too have both greetings, separated but forming parts of the prayer as a whole. Another London manuscript gives the Our Father and the Hail Mary as prayers, the one following the other. From all this it is evident that at this time the Hail Mary began to be looked upon as a prayer next in importance to the Our Father.

Father Thurston has no doubt that the Hail Mary came to be more and more widely known through the Little Office of Mary, and thus became a truly popular prayer.

The advance of the Hail Mary to a position alongside the Creed and the Our Father is evident from certain diocesan decrees. Up to the twelfth century, the diocesan decrees mention only the Our Father and the Creed as prayers that all the faithful must know and understand. But towards the end of the twelfth century the Hail Mary appears in the list and is placed beside the Our Father. The earliest instance we have is for the diocese of Paris (1198). Other dioceses followed in rapid succession: Durham (1217), Treves (1227), Coventry (1237), Le Mans (1247), Valencia (1255), Norwich (1257), Rouen (1278), Liege and Exeter (1287); the synods of Bergen (1320), Drontheim (1351) and Skalholt (1354). West of the Rhine similar regulations were drawn up in the next century. But the Hail Mary ended with the words, "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ." "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," or "Jesus Christ," were the last part of the prayer.

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In the thirteenth century preachers began to instruct the people about the Hail Mary as they had previously given instruction about the Creed and the Our Father. Saint Albert the Great, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Bonaventure used the Hail Mary in its short form as the basis for their sermons. The most famous German preacher of this period, Berthold of Regensburg (died 1272) once explained to the people that godparents should teach their godchildren the Our Father and the Creed, and then he added: "If they are able to understand the Hail Mary as well, that is 'a great wonder'," which meant that it would be a very good thing.

In the same period the Hail Mary appeared in the legends or, rather, the legends popularizing the prayer began to spread. There is the legend of the drowning sexton who was saved by Mary. It begins with the reference to the Ave Maria:

The Ave Maria is a prayer.  
Who has ever prayed it faithfully,  
And still continues so to do,  
Great indeed his reward shall be  
When the loving Queen,  
Mary, Lady mine,  
Helps in time of need.

From the thirteenth century the Hail Mary was a favorite prayer of the faithful. They put it on a par with the Creed and the Our Father and prayed it with them. In the next century the name of Jesus or Jesus Christ and the Amen began to be added to the customary formula of the Hail Mary. Then it read: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ. Amen."

In the prayer book. *Soul's Consolation (Der Seelen Trost)*, dating from 1474, the Hail Mary is divided into four parts: the greeting of the Angel Gabriel; the greeting of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin; the holy name of Jesus Christ; and the Amen. Ancient records show that Pope Urban IV (1261-64) granted an indulgence for the recitation of the prayer with the addition of the words "Jesus Christ."

The formula cited above is found in a prayer book printed in Paris in 1498, in the *Imitation of Christ*, and in practically all the catechisms of the sixteenth century, if they have the prayer at all.

In certain isolated regions there still was a trace of the old formula up to a generation ago. As late as 1900, in the Alps, especially in the Zillertal and Allgau, there were still some old women who ended the Hail Mary with, "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ." And it is known to have occurred in Ireland about the same time, that simple people, if given a penance, let us say of ten Hail Marys, would inquire if they were to say the "Holy Mary, Mother of God," or merely the Hail Mary without this petition.

The second part of the Hail Mary, the "Holy Mary, Mother of God," arose in the same way as the first part. It had its origin in the imitation of liturgical prayers. But obviously, since this occurred only much later, the union of the petition with the Hail Mary and with the rosary belongs to later centuries.

### **Origin of the Psalter of 150 Aves**

When the recitation of the Hail Mary became widespread, corporeal prayers were joined to it, just as they had been to the Our Father and other short prayers. More a greeting than a prayer, the Hail Mary would spontaneously attract reverences and marks of deference, which have always been looked upon as tokens of respect for the noble and exalted.

In the event that anyone should wish to increase the number of Aves, the most natural figure would be 150, since the number of Our Fathers had been substituted for the same number of Scriptural Psalms, prayers directed to the adoration and glory of God. Now, in praise of Mary one would recite, just as often, the greeting addressed to her by the Angel Gabriel, the messenger of the Lord. Repeating the words of the all-wise God Himself, sent to Mary in greeting, could only bring joy to her heart - joy to her, and recompense to her children through her intercession with Jesus!

The thought was very dear to the saints and holy men and women of the Middle Ages. Says Hugh of Saint Cher, O.P. (died 1263): "If we greet Mary in this way, she will not be so impolite as to fail to return our greeting. When Elizabeth heard the salutation, she was filled with the Holy Ghost. Wherefore we should always continue to salute Mary, so that we may also be filled with grace when she greets us in return." The words of Albert the Great are quite similar: "Mary and we should greet each other often. We should greet her because we want to have her greet us too."

Various records may be cited to show how the practice of reciting 150 Hail Marys spread everywhere. One tells us that the hermit Aybert in Hennegau (died 1140) recited the Hail Mary 150 times daily in the following form: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." At the first 100 Aves he made genuflections, at the

last fifty he prostrated himself on the ground. The old legends furnish reliable evidence of the spread of this practice of saying 150 Hail Marys. A Scottish manuscript from Auchinlek, about the year 1310, tells about the "origin of the psalter of 150 Aves." A certain youth, such is the Auchinlek legend, had the habit of reciting daily fifty Hail Marys in honor of Our Lady. Then Mary appeared to him one day and told him to pray the fifty Hail Marys three times every day, in the morning, at noon, at night. He was to count the prayers on his fingers, ten by ten, and after each ten sing a hymn to her. As she appeared to him poorly clad, she pointed out that this was because his prayers were so short. The youth promptly hearkened to her advice and recited the 150 Hail Marys every day from then on. On the seventh day thereafter she appeared to him again:

After seven days Our Lady  
Again appeared in majesty.  
Garbed as bride on bridal day,  
And thanked him for the prayer.

Just the contrary case is found in a legend once popular in both England and France. A certain nun, despite multiple occupations, contrived to recite 150 Aves daily. But she raced through the prayers with great haste. The Mother of God appeared to her also and pointed out that she would prefer a mere fifty, provided the recitation be slow and recollected. A southern source for this legend is indicated by the name of the nun, Eulalia, which in Greek means "the Well-Spoken One." The Latin version of the story mentions that the nun recited the 150 Hail Marys with an equal number of *veniae*, meaning that she genuflected at every Hail Mary. Obviously, we have in this devotion evidence for corporeal prayer on the one hand, after the manner of the old Irish tradition, and of the rosary in the sense of the later practice, on the other.

Mary gave the following assurance, the legend continues: "As often as men honor me with the Angelic Salutation I feel a joy well up in me at the words, 'the Lord is with thee,' a joy which cannot be described." And while Mary was speaking in this manner, so runs the legend, some measure of the self-same joy flowed into Eulalia's heart, filling it with a sense of blessedness.

Through popular oral tradition a prayer has been passed down to

very recent times, a prayer which bears a remarkable resemblance to this legend. One cannot escape the conclusion that it is derived from the early period and was passed on from generation to generation; and likewise that it was originally a prayer with a refrain: "Hail, Mary! Hail, Mary! Thus I greet thee thirty-three thousand times. Your heart rejoices, and my heart rejoices over the greeting of the angel."

As in the legend, so in this prayer there is reference to the joy which Mary feels whenever the angelic greeting is directed to her, and to the joy which one experiences when addressing the words to her. Moreover, it is a striking fact that in this short prayer the Hail Mary is repeated at the very beginning. In the light of all we know about the old prayers with their bows and genuflections, favorite prayers in olden times, we must assume that some exterior act of reverence was once connected with this first Hail Mary.

Not only individual laymen, but whole groups bound themselves to the daily recitation of the 150 Hail Marys in these centuries. As an instance, we need only think of the Militia of Christ, founded by Saint Dominic. The Confraternity of Prayer, founded in Piacenza in the year 1259 by the Dominicans and approved by Alexander IV should also be included. There were many others like them. These confraternities of prayer were prototypes of the Rosary Confraternity. Without them, this confraternity, approved for the Universal Church, would probably never have come into existence.

### **3. The Psalter of 150 Affirmations of Faith in Christ**

Pius X, in the Preface to the new breviary, calls the Psalms of the Sacred Scriptures a "carefully veiled image of Christ the Saviour" . . . *"imago Christi studiose adumbrata."* The Middle Ages viewed the Psalms in the same light: they were a set of prophecies about Jesus. Men sought to lift the veil so carefully placed over the image. By turning from Psalm to Psalm and searching for their deeper meaning, statements about Jesus Christ and the work of Redemption were gathered and synthesized. The result, a new substitute Psalter, then took the name *Psalterium Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, "Psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ." The word psalter connoted something solemn, something of song, poesy and mysticism, praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Such a psalter arose from a deep study of the sacred pages, setting the words of the Psalms over against the life of Jesus told in the Gospel, comparing them and referring them to one another. Only one conversant with both the literal and mystical sense of the Psalms could find in each Psalm references to Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Likewise, if anyone read the psalter and in any instance learned it by heart, he would have to possess the faculty of fathoming the new meaning, or at least have the good will to be instructed in it by others. In brief, in those psalters from the very beginning there was something which we would today call "meditation." Meditation, surely, was not new at that time; it had a long tradition behind it. In the works of Saint Catherine of Siena there is a counsel given by Jesus, which is quite pertinent to our discussion: "Know well, My daughter, that all the mysteries, all the actions accomplished in this world by My truth, whether with the disciples, or apart from them, were representative of what passes in the inmost soul of My servants and of all men. You may draw from these facts a lesson and a rule of life. They should be meditated upon in the light of reason; and the most uncultured minds as well as the most subtle, ordinary intellects as well as the highest, can derive profit from them; each can take part in them, if he will."

Various saints and theologians felt impelled to compose such psalters: Saint Edmund, Bishop of Canterbury (died 1240), Stephen Langton, Cardinal and Bishop of Canterbury (died 1228), Abbot Engelbert of Admont (died 1331), William of Degeville, O. Cist, (died 1358), Jerome of Mondsee (died 1457), Anthony of Lantsee at Basel, Abbot Ulrich von Stocklin of Wessobrunn (died 1458). Abbot Ulrich composed seventeen psalters in all.

Since no little work was involved in composing a psalter like that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, series of 150 praises in honor of Jesus Christ were drawn up without reference to their conformity with the different Psalms. These groups of praises started out by being based on events in the course of Jesus' earthly life. Thus, the Psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ developed into an account of the life of Jesus, telling in short phrases the principal events which took place from the Incarnation to the Ascension.

#### **4. Marian Psalter: 150 Praises of the Blessed Virgin**

There was an easy transition from the psalter of 150 Our Fathers to the psalter of 150 Hail Marys. Besides the "Psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ" just referred to, there arose a "Psalter of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary," which was an amplification of the former. The object was to glorify the Most Blessed Virgin in such a way as to refer one Psalm after another to her.

A passage from the book, *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, reveals how in the Middle Ages the Psalms were looked upon as a veiled and prophetic representation of the plan of salvation in the New Testament, and in them one could trace the features of Mary. In the work just mentioned, it says that the psalter contains the 150 Hail Marys corresponding to the 150 Psalms for the reason that in precisely these 150 Psalms "the glorious Virgin and Mother of God is prefigured, announced, and foretold as the truth in shadow (*imago adumbrata*), as the end in the means, the blossom and the fruit in the tree."

One of the most ancient psalters is attributed to Saint Anselm. From this work we select an example of a Psalm interpreted as referring to Mary. It may be looked upon as typical of all the Marian Psalms. The first of the Scriptural Psalms begins with the verse, "Blessed is the man who follows not the counsel of the ungodly, and enters not into the way of sinners, and sits not in the company of the insolent." In the psalter of Saint Anselm the same verse, referring to Mary, reads as follows: "Hail, Mother of our Mediator, who goeth forth blessed through the divine decree, from the abode of the virginal body as from a bridal chamber."

In the psalter of Stephen Langton the same verse is interpreted in the following manner: "Hail, Virgin of virgins, who didst conceive a Child in virgin womb! Grant that we may meditate often upon the divine law and enter into blessedness in the kingdom of His glory." Another psalter of the same period has the following variation: "Blessed is the man who ponders on the law of God! What, then, should one say of Mary, who on her Assumption into heaven was crowned as Queen!"

Marian psalters existed in great numbers and variety, but their authors, like the composers of the hymns, often remained unknown. At times under certain circumstances beautiful psalters were

attributed to a saint upon whom one chose to confer the honor of authorship. Widespread were the psalters of Saint Edmund and of Saint Anselm of Canterbury. Famous also was the work of a monk named Theophilus from the diocese of Rouen. The anonymous psalters are named after the places where the manuscripts are found, e.g., Kremsmünster or Reichenau.

In the psalter attributed to Saint Bonaventure all the first fifty acts of praise begin with the word, Ave, Hail; the next fifty begin with, Salve, "Hail"; the next with, *Gaude*, "Rejoice." This arrangement, taken over by the other composers of psalters, provided the basic pattern for the later arrangement into Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries, and influenced the choice of the mysteries themselves.

All the psalters treated thus far were written in Latin. Some of them, as the mystery series of Stephen Worthington, appeared in both Latin and English at the same time. Others appeared first in Latin, and were later translated into the vernacular.

In addition to these compositions were the Marian salutations, which appeared originally in the vernacular. The first fifty often followed the pattern of Saint Bonaventure's psalter, beginning with "Hail"; the following fifty with "Rejoice"; and the last fifty with "Help us," or something similar. Some of the psalters were still looked upon as corporeal prayer; the reader was instructed, for example, to genuflect at the first nine strophes, and to recite the tenth with outstretched arms.

Following is an example of the beginning of such a Rosary:

Mary, Mother, thee I greet.  
Help me, that I repent my sins,  
Which, sad to say, are far too many.  
Hence, pray for me, thy dear child.

In other points the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin followed the same course of development as the Psalter of Our Lord. The close bond with the Scriptural Psalms was broken, and 150 loosely connected praises of Mary were selected. Henry of Kalkar, for example, composed a poem consisting of 150 "mysteries," which really were



so many phrases referring to the life of Mary and concluding with the act of consecration: "Thrice fifty words I consecrate to thee, O Mary. Accept this little psalter, I beseech thee, gracious Virgin!"

Later the individual phrases in honor of the Blessed Virgin were joined together into a life of Mary.

The life of Jesus could not be set forth in a psalter of Our Lord without at the same time including the life of Mary. And, conversely, the life of Mary set forth in short phrases had to focus attention even more sharply on the life of Jesus. The result was two series inwardly connected - the same picture with different lights and shadows. All this played a significant role in the subsequent development of the rosary.

When the series consisted of fifty instead of the 150 strophes in honor of Mary, it was called a *rosarium*, a very common term in medieval Latin. The scholarly Arnold of Villanova used the word *rosarium*, a bouquet, to designate selections from the writings of the old philosophers. Guido de Bayiso, a jurist, does not hesitate to call a collection of canonical decisions a *rosarium*. However, by preference the term was applied to prayers of praise. The hymn, "*Jesu, dulcis memoria*," for example, is taken from a *Rosarium Jesu*, which originally had fifty strophes. It was a "rosary" with fifty rhymed prayers. Thus, the series or chain of strophes in honor of the Mother of God was designated as a *rosarium*. From these psalters in honor of the Mother of God and the *rosaria* recited in her praise, the name later passes to the rosary with fifty Hail Marys.

# Combination of the Four Psalters into the Rosary Psalter

The four psalters - the psalter of 150 Our Fathers; the psalter in honor of the Mother of God, with 150 Hail Marys; the psalter of Our Lord, with 150 phrases referring to the life of Jesus; and the psalter of the Blessed Virgin, with 150 phrases referring to the life of Mary are obviously not related to one another in the same degree. The psalter with 150 Our Fathers and the psalter with 150 Hail Marys, on the one hand, and the psalter with 150 phrases referring to the life of Jesus and Mary, on the other, form two separate groups.

An age which constantly strove towards the achievement of unity would find it most natural to attempt a synthesis of the four psalters. At first, the psalter of 150 Our Fathers was joined with the psalter of 150 Hail Marys to form a new psalter, with the result that the Our Father and the Hail Mary followed each other in a definite series. This was like having two churches, one with square pillars, the other with round columns, and then constructing a third with alternate pillars and columns. Obviously, before a rosary could be formed in which Our Father and Hail Mary would be joined, the practice of reciting them together had to be established.

According to an English record, this dates from the eleventh century. We have already referred to it in our treatment of the origin of the Hail Mary. Among the oldest and most important testimonies to the practice of joining the Our Father with the Hail Mary are the rules of life of the recluses and the incluses. The former are those hermits who lived according to a rule approved by the Church. The latter are men or women solitaires who had themselves immured in cells. Since these holy men and women were lay-folk, they were obliged from the very beginning to recite the prayers which were universally known among the people. The basic units, therefore, were the Our Father and the Hail Mary.

From the so-called Rule of Baumberg for incluses we have evidence which dates back to the twelfth century. If the reading is genuine and not an interpolation, we have in this manuscript one of the first

documentary proofs that the Hail Mary was, as a rule, added to each of the 150 Our Fathers of the psalter of 150 Our Fathers. At any rate, there is evidence of such a form of prayer in a thirteenth-century Middle English rule for inclusions. This rule obliged the hermits to recite for both Matins and Vespers forty Our Fathers and Hail Marys, for Lauds, fifty Our Fathers and Hail Marys, for Prime, twelve Our Fathers and Hail Marys, and for the Little Hours and Compline, ten Our Fathers and Hail Marys. Other obligatory prayers, for example, for benefactors, consisted of a specific number - usually thirty - of Our Fathers and Hail Marys.

In the Cistercian Order the lay Brothers were obliged to recite a certain number of Credos every day, in addition to the Our Fathers and Hail Marys. This may be the origin of the practice of reciting the Apostles' Creed either at the beginning or at the end of the rosary. A portion of an old prayer for good weather might be mentioned in this connection. It dates from the fifteenth century, and contains the prayers which make up the rosary - the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Mysteries concerning the Blessed Virgin. All are placed together, forming one prayer.

If we translate the Latin and write out the abbreviations, we have the following text: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Christ, who was born; Christ, who suffered; Christ, who arose from the dead; Christ, who reigns; Christ, who rules. O King of glory, bring us peace! Our Father. Hail Mary."

We do not know how the man of the fifteenth century was able to make a spiritual unit of his prayer, with the Hail Mary at the beginning and the formulas about Christ at the end. Nevertheless, the Hail Mary, the Our Father, and the rosary mysteries are nevertheless united. Actually Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort in his "short" rosary still gives the Mysteries in part, just as we find them here connected with the Hail Mary. He says: "At the first decade of the first rosary, one should pray: Jesus incarnate; at the second: Jesus, sanctifier; at the third: Jesus, poor child; at the fourth: Jesus, victim; at the fifth: Jesus, Saint of saints."

Quite possibly, the section of the prayer for good weather referred to is a distinct and independent prayer. Its position in the text may

be due to an interpolation. At any rate, in the old prayer for good weather the Our Father stands alone or is connected with the Credo.

The 150 Our Fathers and the 150 Hail Marys were finally joined. The Hail Marys were bracketed into decades by means of fifteen Our Fathers, standing like columns between the Hail Marys. This arrangement, so far as can be established by documentary evidence, dates back to Henry of Kalkar on the Lower Rhine. He was the Visitor of the Carthusian Order and lived mostly in Cologne, where he died in 1408. Through the Carthusians this form of prayer was brought to England. A written account of the year 1440 attests that the students of Eton College had to recite daily the entire psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, consisting of fifteen Our Fathers and 150 Hail Marys.

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The idea of joining the psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ with that of His Mother Mary must have arisen spontaneously. In fact, it would be impossible to narrate the life of Jesus entirely distinct from that of Mary. But joining the psalters of the life of Jesus and the life of Mary with the psalters composed of fifteen Our Fathers and 150 Hail Marys was not altogether spontaneous. The impulse came from Dominic the Prussian. Between 1410 and 1439 he attached fifty statements about the life of Jesus and Mary to a rosary having fifty Hail Marys and no Our Fathers. These statements resembled those found in the psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the psalter of the Blessed Virgin. In consequence, the fifty mysteries of this rosary embraced the entire life of Jesus: fourteen of them dealt with the hidden life, six with the public life, twenty-two with the Passion, six with the glorification of Christ and the coronation of Mary in Heaven.

The first Hail Mary with its addition read: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ, whom thou didst conceive by the Holy Spirit, through the message of the angel. Amen." The addition to the last Hail Mary read: "Who reigneth unconquered and glorious with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and with thee, His glorious Mother, forever and ever. Amen." Such was the form of prayer of the monk Dominic the Prussian. His prior, Adolf of Essen

(died 1439), made every effort to promote it.

Dominic had in mind, as mentioned before, a rosary of fifty Hail Marys without any Our Fathers. These fifty Hail Marys were linked with an equal number of mysteries. A further step in the development was the union of the fifty Hail Marys with the fifty statements which Henry of Kalkar had introduced. The result was a rosary in which each Our Father was followed by ten Hail Marys, each with a mystery. The whole comprised a series of five such decades. In this form the rosary of Dominic the Prussian was popularized in the vernacular about the year 1518 from Saint Gall in Switzerland. Devout pilgrims, at the tomb of Saint Matthias at Treves, still recite it in its original arrangement of fifty mysteries, a significant instance of the preservation of old forms of prayers continuing through the centuries as local devotions.

\* \* \*

By this time everyone knew that the psalter consisted of three rosaries. Hence it was not long before the new forms of prayer were carried over to the whole psalter. The statements about the life of Jesus and the life of Mary were expanded to 150.

There was a further amplification by addition of a distinct petition attached to the mysteries - a prayer for a certain intention. In this manner the petitioner was led on to even greater reflection and meditation. The petition following the first Hail Mary, to give an instance, reads as follows: "Whom thou hast conceived by the Holy Spirit, not through the works of the flesh. May He (Jesus) fill us with the abundance of His grace, with His holy fear, Amen." To the second Hail Mary, the following was added: "After whose conception thou didst sojourn in the mountain. May He (Jesus) grant that we despise all vanity. Amen."

The different developments affecting the arrangements of the rosary came about little by little. But we may not assume that, as the old made way for the new, the old immediately disappeared. There is a mysterious rule governing all practices, including popular prayers and devotions, whereby a hymn or some other practice really comes into its own only after the oldest people have grown up with it from their youth. And it loses its popularity only after the oldest people

who knew it have died. Thus, the complete introduction of a popular custom, and as well its complete disappearance, would require about a hundred years.

At the time Pierre Alain de la Roche founded the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary (1470), to cite an example, the psalter of 150 Hail Marys without mysteries was still known. He refers to it in a passage in his works, comparing the two forms of prayer, the "old rosary" and the "new rosary." The Mother of God herself is declared to favor the "new" form in preference to the "old." She is quoted as saying: "It is a very beautiful, profitable prayer, a service which is very pleasing to me, to recite the Angelic Salutation 150 times. But more pleasing to me, and much more profitable, is the Angelic Salutation when it is combined with meditation on the life, Passion, and glory of Jesus Christ, for meditation is the soul of this prayer."

Whether the Mother of God spoke these words in an actual apparition, or whether the author merely sought to present very graphically an inner enlightenment, or to dramatize a legend in his own person, is altogether immaterial. In any event, there existed at the time a psalter of 150 Hail Marys, which he called the "old rosary," and to which he preferred the "new rosary" with 150 Hail Marys and 150 mysteries.

For the concluding paragraphs of this section we have reserved a brief survey of the many variants of rosary forms as they arose and developed in various Religious Orders and in various places and spread far and wide. An occasional reader, as he pursues his way through this survey, may feel as if he is lost in a maze, and may grow impatient with all these outgrowths and variations. But we can only beg him to bear in mind that the Christians of previous centuries had to face the same difficulty.

First of all, the rosary consisting of either fifty or 150 Our Fathers; the rosary consisting of fifty or 150 Hail Marys; the rosary of fifty or 150 Hail Marys together with fifty or 150 mysteries - all these still continued to be recited. Then there were other rosary forms. One comprised a series of twelve Hail Marys, corresponding to the twelve stars of the Apocalypse. This number twelve was increased by twelves, according to the number of "mysteries," to twenty-four,

thirty-six, sixty, or 180 Hail Marys. Another rosary had a mystery added to each Hail Mary and to each Our Father, making a total of 165 mysteries. One rosary even had 200 mysteries.

Once the rosary was well established, other devotions were often transformed according to the rosary pattern. The so-called rosary of Saint Bridget is an example. Based on the sixty-three years which the Mother of God was thought to have lived on earth, this rosary numbers sixty-three Hail Marys. The association of this prayer with Saint Bridget is analogous to the association of the ordinary rosary with Saint Dominic. The old biographies of Saint Bridget, which treat her personal religious practice with considerable detail, do not contain a single reference to this form of prayer. But a computation of sixty-three years for the life of Mary can be made from Bridget's revelations, which were held in high esteem and very widely read after her death. Under these circumstances it is not unusual that her name should be associated with the rosary having sixty-three Hail Marys.

The first recorded evidence of the existence of a rosary with sixty-three Hail Marys is the epitaph on a tombstone in Klein-Efferding in Upper Austria, erected in the year 1427 in memory of Andrew Holeinsperger and his wife. On this monument there is a rosary with sixty-three beads. To account for its presence, we assume that both the man and his wife owned such a rosary and often prayed it in their lifetime.

To maintain that the rosary with sixty-three mysteries derives in reality from Saint Bridget, we should have to assume that the prayer forms of the Saint had become known and accepted in Upper Austria soon after her death. Only if such were the case could a rosary with sixty-three beads be placed on a grave stone in Upper Austria in 1427. At this time Bridget had not been long dead; she died at Rome in 1373. In view of these facts, there is good reason to favor the opinion that the rosary did not directly derive from Saint Bridget, but merely gained prestige through her revelations and was named after her.

As already noted, the Brigittine rosary at first consisted of sixty-three Hail Marys. Nevertheless, as in the instance of the rosary with fifty Hail Marys a mystery was later added to each Hail Mary, so a

mystery from the life of Jesus was attached to each Hail Mary of the Brigittine rosary. Such a rosary, to give but one example, was composed by the Englishman Worthington, who published it in a prayer book at Antwerp in 1600.

Another rosary, with thirty-three Our Fathers, calls to mind the thirty-three years of Our Lord's earthly life. Later on, mysteries were added to it also. The Worthington prayer book just mentioned also had one of these rosaries with thirty-three Our Fathers and thirty-three corresponding mysteries.

The Our Fathers and three Hail Marys attached to the present rosary, preceding or following its recital, are derived from the rosary with the sixty-three Hail Marys in honor of the years Mary spent on earth, and from the rosary of the thirty-three Hail Marys in honor of the years of Our Lord's earthly life. The rosary book of Father Henry Bodeker, first printed in 1685, recommends that the following petitions be added to the three Hail Marys: especially, "Increase in us the true faith, confirm in us a strong hope, increase in us eternal love." These prayers are still in vogue today.

By adding the years of Mary's life to those of Our Lord, the sum of ninety-six was arrived at, the basis of still another rosary with ninety-six Hail Marys. There was also one with thirty-two Our Fathers and Hail Marys; yet another with five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys (the prayer to the Five Wounds still recited by the people); one with forty-nine Hail Marys; one with one Our Father, four Glorias and ten Hail Marys; one with three decades of Glorias. This latter is still in existence in the "English Rosary."

Later on in this study we shall refer to a series of sixty-three mysteries and to a series of 150 (on occasion this becomes 165). For the present we shall content ourselves with presenting the various rosary forms in chronological order as they arose. We shall also deal with the various forms developing along parallel lines, mutually influencing one another, intermingling, and thus growing and spreading in endless variety.



# **The Rosary Approved as One of the Devotions of the Universal Church. Founding of the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesu and Mary by Alain de la Roche at Douai in 1470**

In the year 1470 Blessed Alain de la Roche founded the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary at Douai in Northern France, and sought for its approval from Rome. Alain was a Dominican, born in Brittany in 1428. He was active Visitor of his Order from Poland to France. He died in 1475.

The new confraternity was legally distinct from the numberless Marian guilds which arose in the previous centuries, even though in some instances the guild members were obliged to recite the rosary daily. Presumably, there was a subsequent merging, and many of the guilds became confraternities.

Blessed Alain had in mind to transform the lay Orders of Brothers and Sisters of Saint Dominic into a universal ecclesiastical confraternity. This basic plan lay at the bottom of all his efforts. It could have been suggested to him by certain organizations such as those already mentioned as existing at Saint Gall and Reichenau. Their example was followed by others. In the course of centuries, not merely two or three monasteries, but the whole groups united to form confraternities of prayer. One of the monasteries served as central bureau and meeting place. There was a need for a confraternity of prayer, Alain reasoned, which should have for its center and capital, not this or that monastery, but the center of Christendom, Rome itself.

The plan was too novel to gain approval immediately. The age was legalistic: all these things had to be constituted within well-defined legal limits and set off from all else. On the one hand, the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary remained as it had been the special concern of the Dominican Order. On the other hand, as an organization with such far-reaching religious aspects, it

naturally fell within the jurisdiction of the Church. Perhaps this circumstance accounts for Rome's reluctance to approve Alain's confraternity. In fact, the first confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary to be approved by the Church was that of Cologne, which arose in the year 1474.

It received papal approval not on petition of a Religious Order, but at the insistence of Emperor Frederick III.

The ancient record which tells this story seems to breathe the spirit of the olden days. One can sense how at that time the veneration of Mary created an appropriate public devotion in the rosary confraternity.

In the year 1474 war was threatening along the Rhine. At the suggestion of the religious superior of the German province of the Dominicans, Jacob Sprenger, a new rosary altar was erected in Cologne. It was also decided to found a rosary confraternity after the pattern of that which Alain de la Roche previously had brought into being at Douai in 1470. Peace was concluded in May of the next year. With the approval of the papal nuncio, it was unanimously agreed to make the occasion of the founding of the rosary confraternity a festal celebration.

The day chosen was the feast of Mary's Nativity. With great pomp the Emperor and the papal nuncio led the procession to the Dominican church, followed by the princes temporal and spiritual of the realm, and the representatives of the city of Cologne. The nuncio blessed the golden image of Mary and then opened the book of membership in which all who chose could enter their names as members of the confraternity. The Emperor led the list, entering his own name, that of his wife, Eleanore, and his son, Maximilian. Then came the names of men and women of every rank. After the Pontifical Mass, celebrated by the papal nuncio, the Emperor addressed the representative of the Pope and bade him seek papal approval for the confraternity. As a memorial of this occasion, a picture was painted depicting the Pope, the Emperor, and other figures of Christendom, holding their crowns in their hands, and kneeling in prayer before the statue of the Mother of God, with their eyes fixed on Mary. Our Lady, in turn, was shown holding in her hand several rosaries to give to those who wanted them.

On the very day of this magnificent spectacle at Cologne, Alain de la Roche died at Zwolle. The Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary, which he had founded in 1470, had not yet received papal approval. Alain could no longer promote the plan so dear to his heart. But the Emperor took it up at the very moment death forced the good Dominican to relinquish it.

The devotion to Mary, ardently alive in the hearts of the faithful at the time, received in the rosary confraternity a lasting outward form, as is evident from the poem on the rosary by the Danish author Michael. This work appeared in print in the year 1496, not long after the approval of the rosary confraternity at Cologne. Like many other writings of that time, this work had as its source the so-called *materia Alani*, the writings of Alain de la Roche dealing with the rosary.

The very first part of the poem makes it evident that the movement which had spread throughout Denmark was to be traced back to the confraternity of the city of Cologne. Master Michael, as he called himself, tells how Duke Francis of Brittany, accompanied by his wife Margaret, made a pilgrimage to Rome in the year 1478. On this occasion the duke addressed an appeal to the Pope, Sixtus IV, and asked for information about the rosary. Everyone in Denmark, he says, wears a rosary around his neck or carries it in his hand and uses it for prayer. The duke looks upon this practice as a *nymère*, something new. The Pope explained things to the good duke and, upon his request, granted certain indulgences for the recitation of the rosary. In the strophe which sets down this fact, the poet directs attention to the approval of the confraternity of Cologne:

Sixtus, the Pope, fourth by that name,  
To all for piety and profit makes known  
That he establishes the confraternity  
Which began at the city of Cologne  
In the Order of Preachers, and indulgences gave  
To those who say the prayers well.  
To praise God with pious sentiment  
And Mary, His Mother, high exalted,  
On Mary's greatest festal days,  
Her Birth and Annunciation,

And also on her Assumption,  
For this will God give grace.

In the concluding verses the poet urges the various Orders - Dominicans (Blackfriars), Franciscans (Greyfriars), and other members of the Orders, likewise the "itinerant preachers" and the "priests who have charge of churches and parishes" to promote this form of prayer. To the priests he recommends that, in addition to the breviary, they recite a Marian psalter at least once every week.

In this poem of Master Michael there is a discussion of the relation between vocal and mental prayer. The author enters into the subject in a manner that is quite modern and reminds one of the explanations in Maisie Ward's book, *The Splendor of the Rosary*. Master Michael says it would be best if one could penetrate the mysteries of the life of the Saviour and His Blessed Mother without any oral prayer, and tarry there. But the unstable spirit of man is not content with such pure inner contemplation. Wherefore vocal prayer should in some measure assist his unsteady spirit in helping him remain recollected. He says:

Could one pray it at an hour  
When no distraction could occur,  
How pious that would be.  
But the heart is unsteady ever;  
Too freely to earthly things runs wild.  
Much distraction will ever enter.

Hence to pious be, pray with lips,  
And prayers will rise from within.  
So does Alanus teach.  
Recite with beads the prayer dear,  
With heart to Virgin bent.  
In heaven then you shall see her.

The poem has the oldest recorded reference to the relationship between rosary and Mass. Michael says:

The members of the confraternity especially,  
Wherever it happen they might be.  
Every week they shall "read"

Three rosaries, that is, a psalter all complete.  
Of which each rosary is a part,  
At the Hours, or Holy Masses which they attend.

Certain groups of the faithful and even some priests felt that the rosary, as a counterpart to the Scriptural Psalms which the priests pray, really does not belong in the Holy Mass. Sir Michael is opposed to this attitude and points out that the rosary consists entirely of prayers appropriate for this purpose.

Other foundations followed rapidly in the wake of the Cologne confraternity: one at Lisbon in 1478; at Schleswig in 1481; at Ulm in 1483; and at Frankfurt in 1486. The confraternity at Cologne, whose list of members was headed by the name of Emperor Frederick, already numbered 100,000 members in 1489.

The rosary confraternity also continued to maintain its special connection with the Dominican Order. Actually the legend which derives the origin of the rosary from Saint Dominic himself is a manifestation of this historical fact. In regard to this point, Cardinal Schuster has the following to say in his monumental work, *Liber Sacramentorum*: "The early biographies of Saint Dominic do not say that the Saint invented the rosary, for the prayer is much older. The first to give credit to Saint Dominic is Alain de la Roche, towards the end of the fifteenth century. Yet to the Dominican Order belongs the honor of having popularized the devotion with such success that soon it became the most beloved devotion in the Church."

The manner in which the Dominicans taught the faithful to pray the rosary, not merely by external recital, but with the inner spirit of prayer, is shown by the following prescription from the *Speculum Fratrum Praedicatorum*: "We prescribe and direct that those who ordinarily preach on Sundays in our churches preach a sermon on the rosary on one Sunday of the month. In these sermons they should treat the rosary as a whole, or a part of it, with the end in view of increasing the ardor of the faithful in the practice of this devotion. They should have as their objective not merely that the rosary be prayed, but should seek to bring home its mysteries to the Christian people by explaining them in detail."

To the Dominicans belongs the credit of having made the rosary a vocal communal prayer. Their efforts in this regard were eminently successful. As we shall show in a later section of this book, the present-day rosary with its fifteen mysteries, as recited in the Universal Church, is the fruit of their zeal.

# **An Example of the Rosary as It was "Read" in Olden Times**

Any mention of a great number of mysteries, fifty, 150, even 200, immediately raises the question as to which events in the life of Jesus, over and above the fifteen mysteries of the current rosary, were meditated upon, and how there could be community of prayer with so many mysteries.

An old medieval rosary preserved in a village in the Alps should furnish the answer. It is called the "Golden Rosary" or the "Crown of Christ," and has many mysteries. When this rosary is recited in the church of the lofty Alpine village, one realizes very vividly how men recited the long series of mysteries in the Middle Ages. The people would not be able to learn such chains of mysteries by heart, and the reciter would have a difficult time repeating the series with accuracy. In consequence, the rosaries were not "prayed" but "read." The reciter had a printed or written list of mysteries before him. "Reading" the psalter, the Danish poet Michael calls it. In the Alpine village today the leader, a layman, ascends the pulpit and "reads" the mysteries from the printed form before him.

The "Golden Rosary," prayed or "read" every Sunday before the high Mass, has sixty-three mysteries. It is derived directly or indirectly from Stephen Worthington, the English author of the prayer book referred to above. This book popularized his rosary with the sixty-three mysteries; and it mentions another one with thirty-three mysteries in honor of the years of Our Lord's earthly life. Worthington called this the "Crown of Christ," the name which, as noted above, is still applied to the Golden Rosary prayed in the Alpine village.

Despite some minor dissimilarities, the "Golden Rosary" in its present form can be traced back to the olden time when the rosary was still "read." The list given below is intended to do more than satisfy the curiosity of the historian. We hope it will serve to enrich the reader's appreciation of the present fifteen mysteries with many new individual insights.

## **The Mysteries of the "Golden Rosary"**

### *First Series*

1. Who has chosen thee from all eternity.
2. Who has preserved thee from original sin.
3. Who has filled thee with all grace.
4. To Whom thou wast presented in the temple at the age of three.
5. To whom thou didst vow virginity.
6. Through Whom thou wert betrothed to Joseph, the just man.
7. Who greeted thee through the archangel Gabriel.
8. Whom thou, O Virgin, didst conceive by the Holy Spirit.
9. Whom thou, O Virgin, didst take to Elizabeth.
10. Who revealed thy innocence to Saint Joseph.

### *Second Series*

1. Who was born to thee, O Virgin.
2. Who was announced to the shepherds by an angel.
3. Who was circumcised on the eighth day, and called Jesus.
4. Who was adored by the Wise Men from the East.
5. Whom thou, O Virgin, didst present in the temple.
6. Whom Simeon extolled as the Salvation of the World.
7. With Whom thou didst flee into Egypt.
8. Whom thou didst lose, and seek with sorrow.
9. Whom thou didst find again in the temple after three days.



10. Who was subject to thee.

### *Third Series*

1. Who was baptized by John.

2. Upon whom the Holy Ghost descended.

3. Whom God the Father proclaimed His Son.

4. Who fasted and prayed forty days and forty nights.

5. Who was tempted three times by Satan.

6. Who chose apostles and disciples.

7. Who forgave sinners.

8. Who worked great wonders.

9. Who foretold the future.

10. Who entered Jerusalem in triumph before His Passion.

### *Fourth Series*

1. Who ate the paschal lamb with His disciples.

2. Who washed the feet of His disciples.

3. Who instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

4. Who went to the Mount of Olives with His disciples.

5. Who prayed and sweat blood three times.

6. Who was comforted by an angel in His agony.

7. Who was betrayed by Judas, and taken prisoner by the mob.

8. Who was led before Annas and Caiphas.

9. Whom Peter denied three times.

10. Who moved Peter to repentance by a glance.

### *Fifth Series*

1. Who was falsely accused before Pilate and Herod.

2. Whom Herod clothed in a white garment and mocked.

3. Who was scourged for us.

4. Who was crowned with thorns for us.

5. Who, after cruel torture, was presented to the mob.

6. Who was innocently condemned to death.

7. Who carried the heavy cross for us.

8. Who fell three times beneath the weight of the cross.

9. Who was stripped of His garments and nailed to the cross for us.

10. Who died upon the cross for us.

### *Sixth Series*

1. Who arose victoriously from the dead.

2. Who appeared to His disciples.

3. Who appointed His apostles as His representatives.

4. Who chose Peter as Supreme Head of the Church.

5. Who ascended gloriously into heaven.

6. Who sent us the Holy Spirit.

7. Whom the apostles proclaimed throughout the whole world.

8. Who, O Virgin, assumed thee into heaven.

9. Who crowned thee as Queen of heaven and earth.

10. Who will come to judge the living and the dead.

*Seventh Series. Concluding Petitions*

1. Grant that we hearken devoutly to the word of God.

2. Grant that we may retain the word of God in our hearts.

3. Grant that we all may be saved through Jesus Christ.

As Thurston remarks, the series of mysteries of the "Golden Rosary," which remained in actual use from the Middle Ages to our day, gives us a good idea of the numberless chains of mysteries in use simultaneously in those times as subject matter for the "reading" of the rosary.

# The Rosary Takes on the Form of Vocal Common Prayer

1. The Book, *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, of the year 1489, the First Promotional Work Towards a Psalter with Only Fifteen Mysteries

As an illustration of the endless multitude of old and new series of mysteries, running side by side and intermingling, one need only call to mind the last few decades, when the liturgical movement began to spread through various publications. Each country, each diocese, each community; in fact, often each parish had its own distinct devotions, specially printed to suit its own needs.

All the circumstances connected with the use of the long mystery series would make a more simplified rosary, with fewer mysteries, very desirable. A simpler form would correspond with the wishes of those who led the prayer and those who responded. The process of simplification was gradual; as the number of mysteries gradually increased to 150 or 165, now it started to decrease.

In the beginning the number of mysteries in the individual rosary, regardless of the psalter as a whole, was reduced from fifty to five. As far back as 1480 a printed rosary picture, now in the Nürnberg Museum, portrayed only five mysteries, the first, second, third, and fourth of the Joyful, and the fifth of the Glorious Mysteries.

After a number of rosaries with only five mysteries had been spread among the faithful, the next step was to turn the entire psalter with its three rosaries into the new forms. The result was a psalter with only fifteen mysteries. These, however, did not yet coincide with those of our present-day rosary.

While the development was in progress, the rosary book of a Dominican friar attained great popularity. It was published in the years 1483, 1489, and 1492 by Conrad Dinckmuk at Ulm; in the years 1490 and 1492, by Anton Sorg at Augsburg; and again at Augsburg, in the years 1495 and 1502, by Luke Zeisselmaier. It bore the title: *Our Dear Lady's Psalter and the Three Rosaries; how they should be arranged and recited. With many appropriate examples; a*

*solidly useful book.*

The introduction expressly states that "the materials were drawn from the work of Master Alain." The author of this promotional writing was quite conversant with Alain's arrangement of 150 psalms with 150 mysteries. But he did not feel rigidly bound either in the matter of choice or number of mysteries. He felt that he and his contemporaries enjoyed liberty in this matter, a liberty of which he made very generous and deliberate use. In the middle of the book are three pages, each with five colored wood-cuts presenting a new series of mysteries. The first has the five Joyful, the second the five Sorrowful Mysteries of our present arrangement. Of the five Glorious Mysteries on the third page, the first four are the same as those we have today, but the fifth is not the Coronation of Mary. This mystery was united with the Assumption, the fourth. The fifth presented the Last Judgment. A wreath of roses, in which a large rose is inserted between the tens of smaller roses, encloses the picture. The five large roses are the Our Fathers; the small ones the Hail Marys.

The following explanation of the pictures of the fifteen mysteries is given by the author. We reproduce his thought rather than the exact words:

These three pages with the pictures are intended to illustrate how the psalter is to be prayed. Each page has five pictures. When you pray the psalter, study the first picture of the first page either before or while you pray the first decade of Hail Marys. After you have finished the recitation, study the second picture and recite the second decade. Similarly recite the third, fourth, and fifth decades. Then you have finished the first page and its pictures, and also the first rosary and its five Our Fathers and fifty Hail Marys.

The pictures of the second page belong to the second, and those of the third page to the third rosary. Ponder these in reciting the second and third rosaries.

The author gives the pictures and the explanation as a conclusion to the instruction on the rosary confraternity. He leaves no doubt that his observations are directed particularly to the members. With the pictures he presents a variety of methods of recitation, and concludes with, "You may arrange the psalter in this way (that is, combine prayer and meditation), or find another that suits you.

In passing, he offers a substitute of sorts for the usual 150 mysteries joined with the 150 Hail Marys. He sets up what we might call 150 "points of meditation, reflecting perhaps his own personal taste, but also indicative of the medieval spirit. The 150 Hail Marys do not refer to the Psalms of David exclusively. They are bound up with the year of jubilee, the fiftieth year in the Old Testament. The 150 means the fulfillment of the prophetic blessing of the jubilee year. The author says:

The first reason that the psalter has exactly 150 Hail Marys is that the psalter of David has an equal number of Psalms. In these Psalms the worthy Virgin Mary and Mother of God is prefigured and set forth and comprehended as the truth in shadow, the end in the means, the blossom and fruit in the tree. Wherefore, one should pray the Hail Mary 150 times in the psalter.

The second reason why there are thrice fifty Hail Marys in the psalter is found in the Sacred Scripture, where the fiftieth year is the year of jubilee, the year of pardon. Now through the Virgin Mary and through her dear Child, Our Lord Jesus Christ, men have received a threefold pardon. The first is the pardon of guilt, the second the pardon of present punishment, the third the pardon of future punishment. Wherefore, in thanksgiving should we pray thrice fifty Hail Marys to the Mother of God.

The fiftieth year is also called in the Sacred Scripture the year of emancipation. The human race is emancipated from a triple slavery through the exalted Virgin Mary and through her dear Child, Our Lord Jesus Christ: first, from the slavery

of the devil; second, from the slavery of the world; third, from the slavery of the flesh. For this reason we should pray thrice fifty Hail Marys to Mary.

The Scripture designates the fiftieth year as the year of renewal. Through the Virgin Mary, worthy, most exalted, and her Son Jesus, there were three renewals: first, the renewal of the Law; second, the renewal of men; third, the renewal of the heavenly kingdom.

The fiftieth year is called in the Holy Scripture the year of consolation of the sorrowing. Through Mary and her Son Jesus Christ, the human race has received a triple consolation. The first is the forgiveness of sin; the second, the conferring of virtue; the third, the granting of divine help.

The fiftieth year was the year of freedom, singularly so in the Old Testament. In the New, according to Saint John Damascene, mankind was given three freedoms through Mary. The first: men were led from misery of this life into the heavenly paradise; the second: they were raised from death to a new life; the third: they passed from the trials of the world to the kingdom of eternal glory.

The fiftieth year was a sacred festive year in the Old Testament. Through Mary and her Son Jesus Christ, human nature was sanctified in a threefold way. First, through the Incarnation of Christ, whereby it was united with God, creature with Creator. Secondly, through the resurrection of Christ, since Jesus arose with a glorified humanity over which death no longer held sway. Thirdly, in the ascension of Christ, in which human nature, exalted and raised over all heaven, was seated at the right of the Heavenly Father. For these reasons it is fitting that in the psalter we recite the fifty Hail Marys thrice in praise and honor of the worthy Virgin and Mother of God, Mary, through whom all

good has been given to us, and through whom we are guarded and sheltered from all evil. Amen."

Connected with the fifteen Our Fathers from the psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ are corresponding meanings from the life of Jesus:

Jesus suffered fifteen hours.

Jesus suffered fifteen times 365 wounds, so that one would have to pray the rosary daily for a whole year if one would wish to honor each wound of the Saviour once.

Jesus suffered fifteen hours.

Jesus suffered at fifteen places.

Jesus suffered in fifteen parts of His body.

Jesus suffered by fifteen instruments of torture.

Jesus suffered on account of fifteen words.

Jesus suffered fifteen insults.

The author evidently understood how to provide novelty for his readers and at the same time to promote his favorite theme of the fifteen new mysteries, by placing in the foreground attractive words and illustrations calculated to win the reader's favor. First come the fifteen pictures representing the theme. To the pictures are attached 150 points of meditation which in a manner replace the 150 old mysteries. Bound up with the old, the new was not likely to surprise or shock the faithful, but rather prove acceptable. The whole presentation avoided any abrupt transition: passing from the old to new could scarcely be noticed.

To what extent people of the time were edified by such explanations, or how absorbing they found the reading of them, we can no longer decide today. Presumably they were both edified and absorbed. Our only purpose in quoting this extract from the work is to show how the author makes the transition from the 150 old mysteries to the fifteen new ones.



If we institute a comparison between particular comments in this promotional work from the year 1495 with pertinent passages from the work of Blessed Alain de la Roche, we cannot fail to note the essential stages of the development of the rosary. Alain refers to the rosary consisting merely of Hail Marys and Our Fathers as the old one, and the rosary of 150 Hail Marys and 150 related mysteries as the new one. The promotional work of 1489 considered the rosary with the 150 mysteries as already outmoded and calls the one with only fifteen mysteries the new and really good rosary.

The new psalter had a number of advantages: it was distinctly helpful for the faithful as well as for the preacher of the devotion to have the same mysteries in use throughout a considerable territory. Such a development brought to the devotion a degree of uniformity. Moreover, the introduction of fifteen mysteries made the meditation on individual subjects much easier. A separate mystery for each Hail Mary could be pondered only with great difficulty. In fact, the average Christian might find it impossible to take up the mystery in itself and really meditate on it, rather than merely to make it the occasion of a fleeting glimpse into the life of Jesus. Now that the number of the mysteries had been reduced to fifteen, a longer time was available for consideration of each individual mystery. This type of prayer was looked upon with greater favor even by the simple folk, since it helped them understand more fully the meaning of each mystery.

When the book appeared, the series of fifteen mysteries was still new, as is shown by the so-called rosary tables. A rosary table is a picture in which the Mother of God is represented as the Queen of All Saints in a garland of roses. The word rosary here means not a prayer, but a picture honoring Mary. Many such pictures are still preserved, but none of their details corresponds to the fifteen mysteries. Had the rosary with fifteen mysteries been already popularized, then surely it would have appeared on one or other of these tables. It is quite probable, however, that the table had an influence in the reduction of the number of mysteries from 150 to a lesser number, and in the actual choice of mysteries in the shorter series.

Five years after the appearance of *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, which was universally known, there appeared at Wurzburg a pamphlet with the title, *Psalter or Rosary of Our Dear Lady, Arranged for Song by F. Sixtus Buchsbaum, Anno 1500. To be sung often by the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary according to Duke Ernst's melody.*

This pamphlet adopted the rosary with the fifteen mysteries. The whole song had twenty-two strophes with an unequal number of lines. The melody of Duke Ernst, dating from the thirteenth century, is one of the oldest forms of secular heroic song still extant.

According to the title of the pamphlet, the work was intended especially for the members of the confraternity. This recommendation permits us to assume that one or more of the rosary confraternities sponsored the printing and that the confraternities in turn had the support of the Dominican Order, which meant a sure guarantee that the work would be off to a good start and spread rapidly.

Although the verse was not above average, the song became very popular. Over a hundred years later we find it in the Song Book of Mainz and in that of Comer of Vienna.

2. *The Rosary of the Glorious Virgin Mary*, by Alberto da Castello, O.P., 1521. Transition from the Old 150 Mysteries to only Fifteen Mysteries

English scholars speak of "vocal prayer," "mental prayer," and also of "corporeal prayer." And we may add a fourth for the Middle Ages, "picture prayer." Picture prayers, most of them brief, are accompanied by a picture.

Their purpose is to incite the beholder to prayer and to enkindle his spirit during the recitation. The pictures make it possible for the illiterate to use such a book after a short instruction, just as any one today can make the Way of the Cross with the aid of the pictures representing the fourteen stations. The Way of the Cross is the only example of this type of prayer still extant.

The rosary book of Alain de la Roche already recommended that one should turn one's eyes toward an appropriate picture and meditate on it while praying. For the first rosary Alain presented a picture of Mary with the Child Jesus; for the second, a picture of the Man of Sorrows; and for the third, a picture of the saints and the glory of heaven.

In the prayer book of the Danish woman, Jesperdatter (composed about 1500), the picture was on one page and on the other were the words of the mystery.

The most beautiful work based on the picture prayers was the Rosary of the Glorious Virgin Mary by Alberto da Castello, O.P., which was published in the year 1521 in Venice and which greatly influenced the subsequent development of the rosary prayer. It appeared at Paris in French in 1579 and in 1599 at Mainz in German. Essentially the author had the same task before him as the author of Our Dear Lady's Psalter. He sought the solution of the difficulties in the same manner. But he was more adroit: he was able to present the old 150 mysteries in his work in such a way that, instead of proving a hindrance to the spread of the new fifteen mysteries, they were a help. Leaving these 150 mysteries undisturbed, he merely added the fifteen new ones to the fifteen Our Fathers at the head of the individual decades. The new mysteries were given prominence, while the old 150 with the Hail Marys became ten incidental points which explained the mysteries of the Our Father. Thus the ten mysteries of the Hail Mary became ten points of meditation for the Our Father mystery which preceded them.

Following is the entire series of mysteries as Castello presents them to his readers. As in the case of the former list of sixty-three mysteries, the reproduction of this list should satisfy more than a historic interest. It should offer the reader a means of amplifying the fifteen mysteries he already knows by means of new images calculated to enrich his fancy.

## **The Joyful Rosary**

The Our Father Mystery: Mary, the Virgin, has conceived Jesus.

The longing of the holy patriarchs who prayed for the Incarnation of Christ. Our Father.

1. Mary was prefigured through types in the Old Testament.
2. The Virgin Mary was foretold by the holy prophets.
3. The birth of the Virgin Mary was foretold by an angel.
4. The Virgin Mary was sanctified in the womb of Saint Ann.
5. The birth of the glorious Virgin Mary.
6. Mary is presented in the Temple.
7. The holy life of Mary in the Temple.
8. Mary is betrothed to Joseph by the High Priest.
9. The Virgin Mary is chosen by God to be His Mother.
10. The angel announces to Mary the message of the Incarnation.

## II

The Our Father Mystery: The Virgin Carries Christ to Elizabeth.

Saint John the Baptist was foretold by the Prophets. Our Father.

11. The birth of Saint John is announced to Zachary.
12. The Blessed Virgin Mary visits Saint Elizabeth.
13. The greeting of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth.
14. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth recognizes Mary as the Mother of God.
15. The Virgin Mary sings her hymn of praise, the Magnificat.
16. The holy activity of Mary in the house of Elizabeth.

17. The birth of the glorious prophet, Saint John the Baptist.
18. The circumcision of Saint John the Baptist.
19. Zachary is cured of his dumbness and praises the eternal God.
20. Mary returns to her home after the birth of Saint John.

### III

The Our Father Mystery: Mary Gives Birth to Christ.

God's bounty prepares the birth of His Son. Our Father.

21. Mary prays to God, who dispels all suspicion of Saint Joseph.
22. The time of delivery is at hand, and Mary accompanies Joseph to Bethlehem.
23. Our Lord is born to Mary, the Most Holy Virgin.
24. The Virgin Mary lays her Infant Son in His crib.
25. The Virgin Mary obtains in wondrous wise milk for her Child.
26. The angel announces to the shepherds the birth of Jesus Christ.
27. The angels sing: Gloria in excelsis Deo.
28. The shepherds come to adore Jesus Christ.
29. Jesus Christ is circumcised and given His Name.
30. The adoration of the Magi, who come following the star.

### IV

The Our Father Mystery: Mary presents Christ in the Temple.

God gives His commandments to Moses, who then announces the law of purification. Our Father.

31. The Virgin Mary and Joseph go to the Temple in Jerusalem.

32. The Virgin Mary offers her infant Child to the priest.
33. Simeon receives Jesus in his arms and praises God.
34. Anna, the most holy prophetess, praises Christ, the Blessed One.
35. An angel warns Joseph, who takes Jesus to Egypt.
36. As Jesus approached Egypt a palm tree bowed down before Him.
37. As Jesus comes into Egypt all the idols collapse.
38. Herod orders the infants put to death because he wishes to kill Jesus.
39. Mary and Joseph earn their living by work of their hands.
40. Jesus returns to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary.

## V

The Our Father mystery: Mary finds Jesus in the Temple again.

God wills to give us His Son as our Master and Teacher. Our Father.

41. Jesus the Lord, at the age of twelve, speaks with the doctors.
42. Christ Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan.
43. Christ is tempted in the desert by the Evil Spirit.
44. The first miracle of Jesus, at the marriage feast at Cana.
45. Jesus chooses twelve apostles and makes Peter the Shepherd of the Church.
46. The transfiguration of Jesus on Mt. Tabor.
47. Jesus the Lord announces His most holy teachings.
48. The wondrous conversion of Mary Magdalen.

49. The great miracles which Christ works by His own power.

50. The raising of Lazarus to life, wrought by Jesus in a wonderful manner.

### **The Sorrowful Rosary**

#### **I**

The Our Father Mystery: Jesus, our Dear Lord, prays in the garden.

Jesus is charged by the Eternal Father to suffer for us. Our Father.

51. Jesus enters Jerusalem, riding the ass, with the colt.

52. The Jews conspire, and Judas betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

53. Jesus eats the paschal lamb and institutes the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

54. Jesus washes the feet of all His apostles.

55. Jesus gives His last discourse, in which He instructs His apostles.

56. Jesus prays in the garden and sweats blood.

57. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John aside with Him.

58. Judas betrays Jesus with a frivolous kiss.

59. Jesus says: "I am He," and hurls all the Jews to the ground.

60. Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, and Jesus is taken captive.

#### **II**

The Our Father Mystery: Jesus is scourged.

Meditation on the cruel scourging which Jesus suffered. Our Father.

61. Jesus is taken to Annas and struck on the cheek.
62. Saint Peter denies Jesus thrice and then weeps bitterly.
63. Jesus is condemned by Caiphas as worthy of death.
64. Jesus Christ is struck in the house of Caiphas.
65. Jesus is led before Pilate, and Judas hangs himself.
66. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod.
67. Herod sends Jesus back; Pilate declares Jesus innocent.
68. Pilate interrogates Jesus. Jesus answers him.
69. The Jews demand that Barabbas be set free and Jesus be crucified.
70. Jesus is most cruelly and violently scourged at the pillar.

### III

The Our Father Mystery: Jesus is crowned with thorns.

How severe and cruel was the Passion of Jesus. Our Father.

71. Jesus is decked in a royal mantle and crowned with thorns.
72. The crown of thorns is pressed into Jesus' head.
73. Jesus is mocked and spat upon and struck with a rod.
74. Jesus is given mock honor by the servants of Pilate.
75. Jesus, crowned with thorns, is led before Pilate.
76. Pilate advises the Jews that they should not persecute Jesus.
77. The Jews demand that Jesus be crucified.
78. Pilate asks Jesus if He is the Son of God.



79. Pilate seeks to release Jesus; the Jews invoke the threat of the emperor.

80. Pilate presents Jesus to the Jews as their king.

#### IV

The Our Father Mystery: Jesus carries the heavy cross.

Meditation on our duty to imitate Jesus in distress and sorrow. Our Father.

81. The wife of Pilate warns him not to condemn Jesus.

82. Pilate washes his hands to display his innocence.

83. The Jews cry out that the blood of Jesus be upon them.

84. Pilate has the judgment pronounced; Jesus is condemned to be crucified.

85. Jesus takes up His cross and carries it to Calvary.

86. The holiest and best of Mothers meets her Son.

87. Jesus is led to his death and the cross is laid on Simon.

88. As Jesus goes to His death, He foretells evil to come.

89. Jesus, the most innocent Lamb, is hurried on to death.

90. Jesus presses His face into the towel of Veronica.

#### V

The Our Father Mystery: Jesus is crucified for us.

Meditation on the Passion and death of Jesus our Blessed Saviour. Our Father.

91. Jesus is nailed to the cross amidst great suffering.

92. Jesus is raised up on the cross and placed between two thieves.

93. Jesus prays for those who crucify Him, in order to give us an example.
94. Jesus on the cross promises paradise to the thief at His right.
95. Jesus recommends His Mother to the Evangelist.
96. Jesus hangs on the cross for three hours; the sun is darkened.
97. As Jesus suffers thirst on the cross, He is given gall and vinegar to drink.
98. Jesus declares that the Holy Scriptures referring to Him are fulfilled.
99. Jesus breathes forth His spirit, and His side is lanced.
100. Jesus is taken down from the cross and laid in the grave.

### **The Glorious Mysteries**

#### **I**

The Our Father Mystery: Christ rose from the dead.

The Resurrection of Christ, over which we should rejoice. Our Father.

101. Christ frees the souls of the holy patriarchs from limbo.
102. Christ arises from the dead to a glorified life.
103. After His Resurrection Christ appears first to His Mother.
104. Jesus appears in the guise of a gardener to Mary Magdalen.
105. Jesus appears to the three Marys on the day of His Resurrection.
106. Jesus appears to Saint Peter before He appears to the other apostles.
107. Jesus appears to Saint James the Less after the Resurrection.

108. Jesus appears to the two disciples who went to Emmaus.

109. Jesus appears to the ten apostles on the day of the Resurrection.

110. Jesus appears to the apostles, shows Saint Thomas the marks of His wounds.

## **II**

The Our Father Mystery: Christ ascends into heaven.

Meditation on the exaltation of human nature through the ascension. Our Father.

111. Jesus makes Saint Peter Pope and places him over His flock.

112. Jesus commands His apostles to preach all over the world.

113. Jesus eats with His Mother and with His apostles.

114. Jesus takes His departure from all His dear ones.

115. Jesus ascends upward, blesses His Mother and all those present.

116. As Jesus ascends into heaven, a cloud envelops Him.

117. Two angels appear and foretell the second coming of Jesus.

118. Jesus presents Himself to the eternal Father and is crowned by Him.

119. Jesus sits at the right of the Father in equal glory.

120. Jesus as man beseeches the Father to pardon our sins.

## **III**

The Our Father Mystery: Christ has sent the Holy Spirit.

Meditation on the Holy Spirit and His gifts. Our Father.

121. Mary and the women pray with the apostles for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
122. The Holy Spirit comes down upon the apostles on Pentecost.
123. The apostles speak various tongues, to the astonishment of all.
124. Saint Peter converts three thousand people through one sermon.
125. The Christians have all possessions in common and persevere in prayer.
126. The miracle of Saint Peter as proof of the Resurrection.
127. The angel frees the Apostle Peter from prison.
128. The apostles are scourged for love of Christ.
129. The Roman centurion Cornelius is baptized by Saint Peter.
130. The apostles disperse throughout all the world and preach the faith.

The underlying principle in this arrangement, by which the Our Father mystery contained the mysteries accompanying the following decade of Hail Marys, unavoidably caused some overlapping at the end of the psalter. In presenting the mystery of the Assumption of Mary in ten parts, nothing remained but to include also the Coronation of Mary in heaven. The fourteenth Our Father mystery, which was the main mystery, was constructed, accordingly, in the following manner:

#### IV

The Our Father Mystery: Mary is assumed into heaven.

Meditation on the splendor of the glorious Virgin Mary.

131. The Virgin Mary visits the places in which Jesus suffered.
132. Mary instructs everybody in the Christian faith.

133. Mary is informed by angels about her demise.
134. All the Apostles gather with the heavenly court for the passing of Mary.
135. Jesus comes with the heavenly court at the passing of Mary.
136. The passing of the Virgin Mary, and the heavenly joys.
137. Mary is crowned by the Most Holy Trinity.
138. The Virgin Mary is seated at the right hand of her Son.
139. The apostles hold the funeral and bury the body of Mary.
140. The Virgin Mary prays ever to her Son for sinners.

After Castello had included the coronation of Mary in the unfolding of the fourteen mysteries, he was naturally unable to use it as the fifteenth Our Father mystery, the main mystery. He had to look further afield and he did so. In consequence, the fifteenth Our Father mystery, the main mystery, runs thus: "The glory of God and the saints. Meditation on the glory of the saints."

The ten parts of this fifteenth Our Father mystery turned out to be such that they could have been brought under the title, "The glory of Mary and the saints," or just as well under the title, "The glory of Mary as Queen of All Saints."

The fifteenth series of mysteries is as follows:

## V

The Our Father Mystery: The glory of God and the Saints.

Meditation on the glory of the saints.

141. The glory of the Most Holy Virgin, the Mother of God.
142. The glory of the angels and of the holy spirits of heaven.
143. The glory of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament.

144. Meditation on the glory of the Prophets.
145. Meditation on the glory of the Apostles.
146. Meditation on the glory of the Martyrs.
147. Meditation on the glory of the Doctors of the Church.
148. Meditation on the glory of the Confessors.
149. Meditation on the glory of the Virgins.
150. Meditation on the glory of all the Saints.

These mysteries have a familiar ring. The hierarchical arrangement of the saints is ultimately based on the litanies, on the Litany of the Saints and presumably even more on certain north Italian litanies of the Mother of God, which are precursors of the present Litany of Loreto. The arrangement of the pictures on the famous rosary tablet of Veit Stosz agrees with this enumeration. Its connection with the litanies just mentioned may likewise be assumed.

Alberto da Castello is important in the history of the rosary for one more reason. He was the first to use the term *misteri*, i.e., mysteries - of the rosary. He took over the expression from its common use in religious tradition or from its use in his Order in Italy. The passage from the life of Saint Catherine of Siena, which is quoted in the concluding part of the section dealing with the unification of the psalter, refers to meditation on the mysteries of the life of Jesus in general, in the same way that we today speak of meditation on the fifteen mysteries which are placed before us in the psalter.

### 3. Final Formation of the Psalter with the Present Fifteen Mysteries

The series of fifteen mysteries in vogue today seems to have had its origin in Spain. At any rate, the most ancient record we have is a woodcut testifying to Spanish origin, and dating from the year 1488.

After the invention of the art of printing, the exact formula of popular oral prayers could be spread more rapidly, as had previously been possible only with liturgical prayers.

The change from the old to the present day usage was easily brought about after the publication of Our Dear Lady's Psalter and the work of Castello. There was really only question of a change of the last mystery. It is indeed conceivable that the Coronation of Mary in Heaven as the fifteenth mystery came into general usage, since it was placed as the fifteenth mystery in Castello's rosary. One reason for the rapid spread of these fifteen mysteries into all Christian lands may be the fact that in those years Spain was at the height of her power and influence.

The sentiment of the age also had its share in the development. For the Baroque period this conclusion of the rosary would have a special appeal. It loved nothing more than to behold the rich and colorful presentation of the heavenly scene painted on the domes and vaults of its churches. A glimpse into the same scene was the conclusion of the rosary.

In the chapter on "The Rosary and the Discipline of the Faith," we shall see how these last two mysteries completed the internal structure of the series.

We cannot be said to have solved the problem of the first use of the fifteen mysteries in vogue today by merely referring to Spanish art. There is some further evidence which should make us hesitate before granting the honor to Spain. There is an old altar-piece from the church of the Dominican convent at Frankfurt, now preserved in the Palatine Museum. It was erected in 1490, and contains the fifteen mysteries. It has three large pictures giving the history of the rosary according to the conceptions of the time. They are encircled by three wreaths of roses, and in the wreaths the present-day fifteen mysteries are pictured in little shields.

In a pamphlet found in the Vallicellana Library, dating from the year 1561, the rosary with the fifteen mysteries is dealt with in such a way as to imply that there was in Italy no other series of mysteries. And in some later periods other forms are rejected as a departure from the correct method.

On the other hand, the old rosary forms disappeared much more slowly in German-speaking countries, because they had fully penetrated the lives of the people. As late as 1577, for example,

Saint Peter Canisius says, in his book on the Mother of God, that the mystery of the Coronation of Mary "usually" was the fifteenth. As late as the year 1856 there appeared in Augsburg a prayer book, called the *Catholic Mission Book*, with a rosary in which each mystery consisted of a brief meditation and five Hail Marys.

In the promotion of the rosary devotion in general, and specifically in the instruction of the faithful in the meditation on the mysteries, the newly-founded Jesuit Order joined the Dominicans and the other Orders. Founded in the sixteenth century, it undertook this work first in the Latin, and then in the Germanic countries.

For the Dominicans, the rosary was, in a figurative way, like a church erected in Mary's honor, and the fifteen mysteries were so many altars from which Mary's praise was proclaimed and her help sought for the Church and the faithful. For the Jesuits, on the other hand, it was a hall of retreat in which they presented points of meditation to the audience, with fifteen easily-grasped and already-known pictures, and they had men pray for the help to form their own lives after the model of Jesus and Mary. Thus, the rosary was promoted in every way. Thus, the rosary appealed to the spirit of an Order founded in the Middle Ages, as well as to the tendencies of a modern Order, and found devotees in both.

Certain priests of the Society of Jesus were among the most ardent promoters. Heading the list is the name of Saint Peter Canisius. A practical genius in the care of souls, he realized the great merit of the devotion and strove to promote it with all his zeal. In his prayer book the Saint took over the fifteen mysteries of the Carthusian Justus of Landsberg (died 1539). He had the German translation of the Litany of Loreto printed at Dillingen in 1558 and thereby brought to the people the litany which is still very often recited in connection with the rosary.

The papal Bulls from the time of Sixtus IV to Pius V mentioned the ten Our Fathers and 150 Hail Marys of the rosary. In the Bull of Pius V, dated 17 September 1569, meditation on the mysteries is mentioned for the first time as essential for the gaining of the indulgences. This official pronouncement surely helped to popularize the existing practice of adding short meditations on the individual mysteries in the recitation of the prayer.



The feast of the Most Holy Rosary was introduced in the year 1573. It had a proper Mass. The prayers of this Mass - we shall treat the matter specifically later on - present in succinct summary the basic features of the devotion as a combination of vocal and mental prayer. The feast gave an added impulse to the instruction of the faithful in the method already in vogue.

From this time on, members of both great Orders took up with renewed ardor the task of spreading the rosary with the fifteen mysteries. Among the many who sought to promote the devotion are to be mentioned: Father John Lopez, with his Spanish rosary book (1584); Father Paolino Bernardini, O.P., a friend of Saint Philip Neri (his book appeared in the year 1579); and Seraphino Razzi, the instructor of Philip Neri. Charles Borromeo, the sainted cardinal, published in 1584 a directive recommending this rosary. To these we must add *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, published in 1602, which furthered the cause of this rosary.

Another book which appeared at this time may not be overlooked. Written by Father Gaspard Loarte, S.J., it was published in 1573, the same year the feast was introduced. It enjoyed an extraordinary popularity and appeared in French, German, Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese. The author went to the heart of the matter and aimed to lead the reader to meditate on the mysteries. The title itself is evidence: *Introduction and Guide to the Meditation on the Mysteries of the Most Blessed Virgin and Mother*. The little book is of importance in so far as it played a role in the life of Saint Aloysius. He knew of it already in 1577. Conceivably, he received it from his relative, Saint Charles Borromeo, who valued it highly, and from whom the pious youth received his First Holy Communion. For Aloysius, with his urge to prayer, it was a veritable emancipation from bondage. Up to this time he was convinced that he was never permitted to omit vocal prayer. Now he realized that he might tarry with God in spirit. Something within him, hitherto in a measure suppressed, burst the bonds and came forth: prayer as he pondered on concepts derived from the picturing of holy things. Mental prayer henceforth set the tone of his spiritual life.

The great development of the devotion took place in the decades after 1573. Not only was there popular instruction in the prayer,

but the forms attained their definitive stage. These characterize the first classical period of the rosary. In the common recitation, each decade was preceded by an oral lesson or a reading about the mystery. In this way even the external practice showed that both kinds of prayer - vocal and mental - were essential.

#### 4. The Original Form of the Rosary with Fifteen Mysteries as Vocal Common Prayer

The Dominicans promoted the devotion of the rosary with the fifteen mysteries largely because it could be learned by heart and easily recited in common. In this lay the advantage over the rosary with many mysteries, which had to be read. But if the new form was to be popularized as common prayer it would have to be made uniform everywhere from the very beginning. *Our Dear Lady's Psalter* (edition 1495) recommends for the recitation of this rosary a meditation on the picture before or during the recitation of the Our Father and ten Hail Marys. At that time the rosary with the fifteen mysteries was recited in this manner: the leader announced the mystery, which was followed by the recitation of the Our Father and ten Hail Marys, the latter in the short form - "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus Christ. Amen." At that time the Glory be to the Father did not belong to the rosary at all. From all this it is apparent that there was a time when the German-speaking people recited the prayers of each decade after the announcement of each mystery.

# Development of the Rosary as a Balanced Alternating Prayer

1. Origin of the Prayer of Petition, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for Us Poor Sinners, Now and at the Hour of Our Death. Amen."  
Formula Determined by the Church in 1568

From what was said in the preceding chapter, it is plain that the rosary in the year 1500 was not yet the dialogue form of prayer which we know today. It was to become such a prayer, resembling the recitation of the psalms in choir, only after the words of petition were added to the words of greeting. To the words of the angel and the greeting of Elizabeth were added the petition to Mary which reads: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us poor sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

This petition to Mary, with its sweet familiar ring, has its own liturgical background. The canonical hours were built up entirely of words of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and petition to God the Lord. But from the thirteenth century, it was constantly becoming more common at the conclusion of the prayers, to turn to the Mother of the Lord. The greetings and invocations addressed to Mary with this purpose in mind regularly contained a petition asking her to show pity to men on earth.

The Christmas antiphon beginning "*Alma Redemptoris Mater*," concludes with, "have pity on sinners." The antiphon, "*Ave Regina Coelorum*" concludes with the words, "Pray to Christ for us." In the Paschal antiphon, "*Regina Coeli*," the conclusion is "Pray to God for us." The *Salve Regina* ends with these words: "After this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus." In the hymn of the Little Office of Mary, which was to be recited five times, the second stanza contained the following petition to Mary: "Mary, Mother of grace, sweet Mother of mercy, protect us against the wicked enemy and take us to heaven in the hour of death."

In the Middle Ages men were as actively engaged in the composition of prayers as in the writing of hymns, and the demand for the one was as great as for the other. We can readily understand

that in all countries popular prayers were sought which in some way correspond to these liturgical Marian prayers. Since the Hail Mary in its old form was only a greeting to Mary, almost spontaneously a prayer of petition would be added to conclude it.

Possibly the beginnings of our present-day "Holy Mary, Mother of God, etc." might be found in the invocations of Mary in the Litany of the Saints: "Holy Mary, pray for us! Holy Mother of God, pray for us!" There were in the very beginning two versions of the prayers, a long and a short one. The latter read: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners!" This is referred to in a discussion of Albert Pius, Prince of Capri, with Erasmus of Rotterdam (1531). The wording is the same in the Carthusian breviary, printed in Paris in 1521, and in the decisions of the Synods of Constance (1567) and Augsburg (1567). The former synod refers to the Our Father and the Credo only by mentioning them, but it gives the Hail Mary and the petition verbatim. Official action of some kind was still to be taken by which those who were ignorant of the petition, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," would be taught it. The Augsburg Synod in the year 1567 used the words, "pray for us poor sinners," in Latin. From the decree we can conclude that the prayer was still recited according to this formula in many places.

The fact that the same formula is still found in France today suggests that it passed over the Rhine from France into German territory.

The longer formula is, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of death." These latter words, "now and at the hour of death," are a forceful manifestation of the religious sentiment in the life of the Middle Ages. The prayer book for the dying, by Saint Anselm of Canterbury, a native Italian (died 1109), contains a Latin prayer in verse in which the last line is a petition to Mary for assistance at the hour of death. Very much like the "Holy Mary," it runs as follows: "Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, protect us against the Evil Spirit and take us to heaven at the hour of our death."

The faithful sensed the inner relation between the two. An inscription on a bell dating from the fifteenth century gives the verse of Saint Anselm in Latin and immediately adds as a

continuation, also in Latin: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of death."

The bells consecrated to Mary were the bells of the dying. Saint Nicholas of Flüe (died 1487) honored Mary as the Patroness of the Dying, and in her honor had on his lips the words: "O Mary, pray to God for us at our last end." The people looked upon this as beautiful and befitting in a holy man. But they all thought it proper too, that on the way to the gallows or place of execution there should be a chapel with the picture of Mary, where the condemned would be given an opportunity to invoke her as the consoler of the dying.

One of the most beautiful prayers to Mary for a happy death has been preserved in popular tradition down to our own time:

O Mary, Maiden red as the rose,  
To you I bring all my woes,  
All my needs to you I bring,  
My soul to you commending.  
When in agony bursts my heart  
And cold lips no more can part,  
When my eyes no more can bear  
And my ears no more can hear,  
Then commend me to His face,  
Beg before His throne of grace,  
Before thy most loving Son, Jesus. Amen.

There is a transition from the old, short version of the Hail Mary to the longer form in the prayer book known as the *Soul's Consolation* (edition of 1480). To the old, short Hail Mary a longer prayer to Mary is attached, in which she is invoked for help in the hour of death.

Saint Anselm of Canterbury, whose prayer for the dying has just been referred to, came from Italy. All of which suggests that perhaps the "Holy Mary, Mother of God," as we pray it today, spread from Italy to all Christian countries. At any rate, our oldest records point to Italy as its place of origin. One of the earliest paraphrases of the Holy Mary is attributed to the poet Dante. It reads: "O Holy Virgin, pray ever for us to God, that He pardon us and deign to give us the graces so to live here on earth, that at the

end He can admit us to heaven." The verses, if not from Dante, at any rate belong to the fourteenth century. There is documentary evidence that Saint Bernardine of Siena (died 1444) used this petition as an introduction to one of his sermons.

In France the prayer appears (1493), in a so-called Shepherds' Calendar. It reappears in Italy in a small work by Savonarola (1495). It is in an instruction of the Archbishop of Mainz, Berthold von Hennebert (1499), in the following form: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen." A rule of the Brigittines from about 1500 shows the Hail Mary with the petition began to prevail. It points out that as often as the Hail Mary is to be recited according to the rule of the Order, the old form should be followed. In private prayer the version with the new appendage is permitted.

The practice of adding the petition regularly to the Hail Mary was first taken over by the Religious Orders in their Canonical Hours. In the breviaries of the Mercedarians and the Camaldolese, both printed in 1514 in Paris, the Holy Mary is given just as we pray it today.

## 2. The Petition, Holy Mary, Added to the Hail Mary

Before anyone could think of making the Holy Mary a part of the Hail Mary in the rosary, and thereby make the rosary a dialogue of prayers, the practice of combining the Holy Mary with the Hail Mary had to be established. That the two were thus combined is shown from a record in the works of the well-known and esteemed Dominican Hebrew scholar and philologist, Peter Schwarz, O.P. He translated the Hail Mary and with it the Holy Mary into Hebrew. He must have looked upon the two as belonging together and in vogue among the people. It seems highly improbable that he would have combined a well-known prayer with a little-known one, and put them together in the Hebrew, which he loved so dearly, as though they were one prayer.

In the year 1568 Pope Pius V in his new edition of the breviary obliged priests to add the Hail Mary to the Our Father in reciting the Office. The form prescribed is exactly as we pray it today. From this time on, the words in the breviary were the model for the use

and popularization of the prayer everywhere in the Church.

Significantly, Saint Peter Canisius still retained the old form in his popular works. With the fine insight of the practical pastor of souls, he clung to the short form, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners," even after the year 1569. His work on the Blessed Virgin, appearing in 1577, and the new edition in 1583, and his little catechism, all have the traditional form. There is also evidence that this old form prevailed in the region of Lyons at late as 1613.

Only after the Holy Mary was attached to the simple Hail Mary was it possible to pray the rosary as an actual responsive prayer or choir prayer. Naturally it would also have to be settled where the mysteries should be placed and how they should be expressed. Regarding this point, the practice which prevailed north of the Alps differed from that south of the Alps, a difference still in vogue. In German-speaking and neighboring territory the mystery was inserted between the first and second part of the Hail Mary. The arrangement was the same as today: "Hail Mary. . . of thy womb Jesus, whom thou, O Virgin, didst conceive of the Holy Ghost. Holy Mary, Mother of God, etc." This arrangement was recommended by Father Saily, S.J. in his various books of prayer, which appeared about 1600; by the Dominican, Copenstein, in 1613; and also by Merlo Horstius in his *Paradise of the Soul*, appearing in many editions after the year 1644.

Saint Louis Grignon de Montfort reports that at a solemn service held at Paris in 1628, the archbishop led in prayer. With a loud voice he read the meditations on the mysteries and then began the Our Father and the Hail Mary of each decade, whilst the members of Religious Orders and others present responded.

The following method was employed in Vienna in the year 1688: the leader announced the mystery and explained it. The first choir recited the first half of the Creed; the second, the remainder. The Our Father and the Hail Mary (the latter ending with the word, "Jesus") were likewise said alternately.

To account for the difference of arrangement north of the Alps there had to be differences in the background relating to the practices in prayer. In these regions whole I series of rosaries had found their

way into the daily life of the people for several generations. The individual Hail Mary was joined with a distinct mystery in these varied forms. Before the Holy Mary had been added to the Hail Mary, all rosaries were arranged according to the following pattern:

1. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), who predestined thee from eternity. Amen.
2. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), who preserved thee immaculate from original sin. Amen.
3. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), who filled thee with all graces. Amen.
4. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), to whom thou wert presented in the temple in thy third year. Amen.
5. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), to whom thou didst vow thy virginity. Amen.

The easiest way to introduce the rosary with the fifteen mysteries as common prayer would be to retain the length and rhythm of the old, and replace the distinct mystery for each Hail Mary by repeating the same mystery ten times in ten Hail Marys. The result would be as follows:

1. Hail Mary . . . thy womb, Jesus (Christ), whom thou, O Virgin, didst conceive by the Holy Ghost. Amen. (Repeated five times.)

To this advantage of an easy transition from the old to the new, we should add the preference of the people due to musical temperament and training. Those accustomed to the prayer in the form of chant or song found in the constant repetition of the same mystery all the rhythm and lilt of song. The mystery took the place of the refrain. Hundreds of songs on the lips of the common people prepared them for this rhythmic form of prayer.

In Italy and other Romance lands the course of development was



different. Another form of the prayer was in vogue. The reciter briefly indicated the mystery at the beginning of the decade; the Our Father and ten Hail Marys followed without interruption. The leader would say for example, "Consider Mary, the Most Blessed Virgin, conceived Jesus by the Holy Ghost." Then the Our Father and the ten Hail Marys followed without any addition.

Probably there were reasons of a local nature to account for the diverse form developed here. We may assume that the psalter with the fifteen mysteries was the very first to be introduced among all classes of the people. In consequence, the rosary simply retained the form it had when it was first introduced. The people preferred a compact and uninterrupted arrangement.

# **Insertion of the Doxology, "Glory Be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost"**

In the Old Testament there were short doxologies which began with the words. "God be praised!" When the Christians took over this form of prayer, they could direct it to God the Father, as well as to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, or to all three Persons in the Trinity. The three were accordingly mentioned one after the other, or in their mutual relationship.

In the East the doxology often took the form: "Glory be to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit," or something similar. Saint Basil (died 379), however, states that the form, "Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," is derived from ancient tradition. In the West, this form "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," prevailed everywhere. It agrees with the words of Jesus in the mission command given the apostles according to which they were to baptize, "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The doxology is given in this form in the Apostolic Constitutions of Hippolytus, who died in the year 235. In the chanting of the Psalms as far back as the third and fourth centuries the conclusion to each Psalm was this doxology of the Holy Trinity.

Perfect uniformity in the formula was due to the Council of Vaison, held in 529. It decreed that the formula for Gaul (this meant all the country north of the Alps) should be the same as that used at Rome and elsewhere, namely, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end."

The doxology in honor of the Trinity has its own distinct character. It is both the first and the last prayer. Beginning, one can proceed to praise the works of God, creation in the Father, Redemption in the Son, sanctification in the Holy Ghost. Conversely, after pondering on all the works of creation, one can ascend from earth to the Source of all things, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, concluding

with the doxology of all three Divine Persons. In the rosary we have the latter form. From Mary the prayer rises to Jesus, and from Jesus to the Most Holy Trinity.

Of the liturgical prayers taken over into the rosary, the Glory be to the Father seems to have had the most remarkable history. Together with the Our Father and the first part of the Hail Mary, it is the most ancient prayer. But it was the last to be inserted into the rosary.

In the Middle Ages the thought of Mary, to be complete, always included the thought of the Most Holy Trinity. Surely at the behest of the Father the Most Pure Virgin conceived in her womb the Son of God by the Holy Ghost. The pictures of Mary expressed this attitude by representing Mary with the Divine Persons.

In the praying of the rosary, reference to the Trinity was assumed from the very beginning. From the most ancient times there are individual prayers to the Trinity which reflect such thought clearly and express it plainly.

We have an example in the manuscript prayer book of the rich Danish widow Jesperdatter (Jasper's daughter), which dates from about 1500. It directs that the prayer to the Holy Trinity be added to every Our Father of the psalter and be said with great devotion before the picture of the Holy Trinity, the picture being on one side of the page and the prayer on the other: "To the all-holy and undivided Trinity, to the crucified Humanity of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, be praise, glory, and honor from all creatures, on earth as it is in heaven, eternally, in all ages, without end." This prayer is almost verbatim the same as that which the priest says every day at the conclusion of the Canonical Hours. The connection of the rosary with the Holy Trinity is further evident in this same manuscript from the very name given to the psalter: it is the "psalter of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Most Blessed Virgin."

Similarly, in his rosary prayer book Louis Blossius (died 1566) directs that after each decade of Hail Marys this prayer to the Most Holy Trinity be added: "Praise be to the glorious Trinity, to the Father, the Son, and the Comforter; praise be to the Virgin Mother

of God, now and throughout eternity. Amen." These were merely beginnings. Universal acceptance of the Glory be to the Father was still a long way off. In Venice, as late as the year 1761, the rosary was still recited without it. In fact, even as late as 1823 when the Latin prayer book, *Libellus Precum*, appeared, the rosary was without the Glory be to the Father.

Father Herbert Thurston derives the custom of ending the decades of the rosary and the Psalms in the Office with a Glory be to the Father from the Dominican church, Maria Sopra Minerva, in Rome. Here, according to the testimony of the Spaniard Fernandez (from the year 1613), the rosary was chanted precisely as the Vespers with the five Psalms. First came the Dens in *adjutorium meum*. . . , then a mystery, then a short meditation on the mystery, then an antiphon, then the Our Father and the ten Hail Marys. One side of the choir led the chant, the other gave the responses. The decade concluded, as did the Psalm, with the Glory be to the Father.

# Survey of the Origin of the Rosary as Counterpart to the Liturgical Hours

We purpose to treat each prayer briefly in the following pages, taking up:

1. Its Origin.
2. Its Liturgical use, which caused its incorporation in the rosary.

## **The Our Father**

### *1. Origin*

The Our Father is the Lord's Prayer, the prayer which the Lord Himself taught the disciples. Jesus said:

"Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

### *2. Liturgical Practice*

In the year 800 there was already a prescription in the monasteries of Saint Gaul and Reichenau obliging the lay Brothers to pray fifty Psalms for each deceased member. An instruction, dating from 1096, is recorded in the monastery of Cluny: A member who is not a priest must pray for each deceased member of the Order fifty Psalms or fifty Our Fathers. One Our Father was a substitute for one Psalm, 150 for 150 Psalms, or the whole Psalter.

## **First and Second Part of the Hail Mary**

### *1. Origin*

The first part is the greeting addressed by the angel Gabriel to Alary. We quote it from the Gospel narrative by Saint Luke: "And when the angel had come to her, he said, Hail full of grace, the Lord

is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." (Luke 1:28-29)

The second part of the Hail Mary contains the greeting of Elizabeth addressed to Mary, according to Saint Luke: "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; so that she cried out with a loud voice, saying, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." (Luke 1:42-43)

## *2. Liturgical Practice*

Both greetings, that of Mary and that of Elizabeth, were already combined in the Offertory of the Fourth Sunday of Advent about the year 600. In the eleventh century the Little Hours in honor of Mary were introduced into practically all Orders. A story told about Saint Peter Damian, who died in the year 1072, makes a comparison between the simple short Hail Mary and the Little Hours in honor of Mary. Since the end of the fourteenth century the name of Jesus or Jesus Christ was added to this Hail Mary.

## **The Petition, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for Us Poor Sinners, Now and At the Hour of Our Death"**

### *1. Origin*

The petition, Holy Mary, Mother of God, comprises two prayers, which arose independently and along parallel lines. The first read: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!" or "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners." The second prayer reads: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death!" Petitions similar to those found in these two prayers addressed to the Mother of God are found in the Litany of the Saints, in the Little Hours, and antiphons of the Mother of God.

### *2. Liturgical Practice*

The first record which contains the Hail Mary and also attests to its use as a popular prayer, dates from the year 1483. The present form of the petition was prescribed first for the Roman Breviary in the year 1568. Thence it found its way into the prayer of the people. Through the addition of the Holy Mary, Mother of God, the rosary took on the form of an alternating prayer.

## **The Prayer, "Glory Be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost"**

### *1. Origin*

This prayer is modelled after the words which Jesus used when He sent forth His disciples to teach and baptize. "Jesus . . . spoke to them saying: . . . Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Doxologies in honor of the Most Holy Trinity were in use in earliest Christian times in both East and West. The present form, as noted above, was prescribed by the Council of Vaison in 529 for the whole Church.

### *2. Liturgical Practice*

From the fourth century it was customary to conclude each Psalm in the choir recitation with the chant of the Glory be to the Father.

Already in the year 1500 there is found in the rosary prayer book of the Danish woman, Jesperdatter, a doxology in honor of the Most Holy Trinity, which was inserted between each decade. The Glory be to the Father as conclusion to the rosary decade is first mentioned in a work of the Spaniard Fernandez of the year 1613. In the Dominican church of Maria Sopra Minerva, in Rome, the rosary was chanted like the Vespers. The Glory be to the Father was placed at the end of each decade as it had been placed at the end of the Psalms in Vespers.

## **Numerical Arrangement of the Rosary**

The basic number 150, which characterizes the rosary, was taken from the number of the biblical Psalms, the collection of inspired prayers. They were the Old Testament prayers of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petition, and penance. The Irish and the Anglo-Saxons divided the book of Psalms into three "fifties." According to a record for the Monastery of Cluny, dating from the year 1096, the lay Brothers who did not know Latin were obliged to pray one Our Father instead of one Psalm, fifty Our Fathers in place of fifty

Psalms.

In the thirteenth century we note the transition: it had been customary to recite the Our Father 150 times in honor of Our Lord. Now Mary was greeted by her prayer. The Hail Mary was recited 150 times in her honor, as were the 150 Our Fathers in honor of Our Lord. Later, the Our Father and the Hail Mary were joined in such a way as to have ten Hail Marys follow one Our Father. After 1400 a mystery from the life of Jesus or Mary was placed after each Hail Mary. The result was a psalter of 150 Hail Marys and 150 mysteries. Around 1500 the number of mysteries was reduced to fifteen. Thereupon, after the one mystery and the one Our Father, ten Hail Marys followed. According to this arrangement the mystery was announced just once before the Our Father was recited, or it was repeated with each Hail Mary.

### **Development of the Mysteries**

The beginnings of development are found in the "Psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ," in which the 150 Psalms of the Holy Scriptures are interpreted as referring to Jesus Christ. These references form a kind of survey of the life of Jesus from the Incarnation to His Ascension (twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth centuries). The "Psalter of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary" followed the "Psalter of Our Lord Jesus Christ." In the former the Psalms pointed to Mary. Thus this psalter assumed the form of an account of the life of Mary (twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries).

From these two psalters, that of Our Lord Jesus Christ and that of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the fifty points, or 150 points, were taken as "mysteries" to be attached to the 150 Hail Marys of the rosary (fifteenth century). To these fifty, or 150 points, which really were only phrases referring to the life of Jesus and the life of Mary, spiritual applications in the form of a petition were later attached. The result was fifty, or in some cases 150, meditations in shortened form (fifteenth century). Finally, the number of mysteries was reduced to fifteen in order to have in the rosary a vocal communal prayer. Now the vocal prayer of ten Hail Marys and the meditation on one mystery belonged together. This latter development began at the end of the fifteenth century and reached its completion in the sixteenth.



## **Various Phases of Prayer in the Development of the Rosary**

The rosary is unique in the many stages of its development. At first the rosary was a "numbers prayer" - a recitation of 150 Our Fathers or Hail Marys, counted one by one. Later on, the rosary became what the English scholars call a "corporeal prayer" - a prayer which is accompanied by bodily movements: at every Our Father or Hail Mary one would make a genuflection or pray with arms extended. When the longer series of mysteries came into vogue the rosary was transformed into a "read" prayer: the mysteries were "read" from a written or printed list. From the "read" prayer the "picture" prayer developed: to lighten the burden for the faithful, for whom reading was too much of a strain, each mystery was represented by a picture. Only after the number of mysteries was reduced to fifteen did the rosary tend to become an oral communal prayer.

# **Part Two - The Rosary: Its Meaning**

# **The Voice of the Liturgy. Summary of the Elements of the Devotion in the Mass of the Feast of the Rosary**

The year 1573 is a milestone in the external history of the rosary, first of all because in this year, two years after the victory of Lepanto, the feast of the Holy Rosary was established. Henceforth, in all churches of the world in which there was a Confraternity of the Rosary, the feast was to be celebrated. The year 1573 is a milestone in the inner history of the rosary as well. Four years before, 17 September 1569, Pius V pronounced the meditation on the mysteries as a part of the rosary prayer. Here we have official approval of a practice already existing and enthusiastically fostered. Now that, in this year 1573, the rosary feast was granted a proper Mass, it became possible for the first time to give authoritative expression to the devotion in its fully developed form. When the Mass and prayers were composed for the feast, an extraordinary use was made of this opportunity. The Collect, Secret, and Post-communion are such striking utterances that they deserve to be characterized as official instruction in prayer, outstanding in that age and for all time.

## **The Collect**

The Collect is two-fold, but well balanced. It refers to all the elements essential to the rosary prayer, which make it distinct from other prayers. It is as follows: "O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death and Resurrection, hath purchased for us the rewards of eternal life: grant, we beseech Thee, that, meditating on the mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise.

Jesus is the one and only Author of salvation, Who wrought reconciliation of man with the Heavenly Father through His Incarnation and the sacrificial death on the cross. He expiated the sins of the world and now makes intercession in heaven for men on earth. This truth is brought to the minds of the faithful by the words, "Whose only-begotten Son, by His life, death, and

Resurrection hath purchased for us the rewards of eternal life."

The words, "life, death, and Resurrection," point to the three rosaries with the five mysteries each. The "life" points to the Joyful mysteries; the "death" to the Sorrowful Mysteries; the five Glorious Mysteries begin with the mystery of the Resurrection, which calls the others to mind. Corresponding to this, in the second part of the Collect there is express mention of the "mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The mysteries of the life of Jesus therefore are the object which we should ever place before our minds spiritually, as the prayer says. The Latin has the word *recolere*, meaning "remember" or "place before the mind." This word is the source of the English word "culture." Culture of mind or spirit is the fruit of many hours of study, of thought, of reflection. Plautus of old used the word *colere* in the same sense of repeated reflection on a specific experience or event. Here the word is used in such a sense. In the rosary of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, accordingly, we should constantly keep before our eyes those historic realities by which the redemption of the world was wrought through Jesus Christ. And we should ponder them with a recollected mind.

An event that belongs to the past may become present spiritually in a two-fold manner: we can look upon it impersonally as an object of scientific investigation and nothing more; or we can take it up as something with a personal meaning for us. In the first case we are making a study, engaging in research. In the second, there is study, surely, but a devoted study, such as is reserved for the most intimate matters.

The Collect speaks of a personal penetration into the mysteries and not of a mere "study" of them, as one might study the life of Caesar Augustus, who was a contemporary of Jesus. At the same time it points out what objective we pursue in pondering the mysteries of the Redemption and what blessing it brings.

As we turn from one Hail Mary to the other we should invoke Mary's intercession with God, that He may make known to us how to "imitate what the mysteries contain." The mysteries may be compared to a great book, which contains a great wealth of

substantial matter. Merely turning the pages and glancing through the book is fruitless. The reader must pore over it page by page, and chapter by chapter, reading it not only once, but again and again. Once a thought is grasped, it must become the basis of further study. The mysteries of the rosary must be studied one after the other, not merely once, but repeatedly with deep inner penetration.

Eventually one will come to the end of any book, at least if it is an ordinary one, but one can never arrive at the end of this book with its life of Jesus and Mary, and its application to our own life and action. The mysteries themselves are unfathomable; unfathomable too is man's life at any moment, and even more unfathomable in its endless variation.

The ultimate unfathomable, the last "why" underlying all these mysteries is the most incomprehensible of all. It is the love of God the Father, who in a human way, manifested Himself to men through the love of Jesus Christ, His Son. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, men learn the life of the Son in the light of the Holy Spirit, as a model for their own lives - and with the life of Jesus they learn the life of Mary. The two are bound up inseparably, both inwardly and outwardly. Through the Immaculate Conception, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was placed as a Christian in a world without Christianity, even before the coming of Christ, the Saviour of the world. The life of Jesus was not merely a part, it was the source, center, and end of Mary's life. The two cannot be severed. Mary's life cannot be divorced from the mysteries of the life of Jesus. Her heart, the heart of the Redeemer's Mother, was filled with love for God and for us, as was no other heart. She is the perfect model in her life, showing how we can imitate her Son, and, in the imitation, love God above all and our neighbor in God.

The conclusion of the Collect also indicates the blessing the Church hopes to obtain through the rosary. The faithful who "imitate what they (the mysteries) contain" will receive from God, through this prayer, what is promised in the mysteries. These promises of the mysteries, we learn from the Secret prayer, are the same as the promises of Christ, which are the good things which Christ Himself secured for us by His suffering, death, and Resurrection. All those who follow Him, and thus imitate His life and Passion, will be

glorified with Him forever in heaven.

The mysteries of the promises are especially those mysteries of the rosary which place before our eyes the glorification of Jesus, for they remind us that He ascended into heaven as He had foretold. He now stands before the throne, the eternal High Priest, Sacrificial Lamb, Victim that was slain but now lives. Before the throne of the Heavenly Father He intercedes for all those still fighting on earth. His Mother, who shared His life, Passion, death, and glorification in her own, likewise was taken up by Him, body and soul, into heaven. She stands before the divine throne as the first of all created children of men and as the spiritual Mother of all men.

This prayer sets down the basic elements of the devotion in their full development. The first part refers to the meditation on the events in the life of Jesus, *mysteria sacratissimo beatae Mariae Virginis Rosario recolentes* - "meditating on the mysteries of the most holy rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary," we ponder the mysteries of the life of Jesus. Then is mentioned the imitation of the life of Jesus in our own lives: *Imitemur, quod continent* - we should "imitate what they (the mysteries) contain." Third point is the petition for the necessary graces for a life which, after death, is transformed into eternal glory: *et quod promittunt, assequamur* - we hope to "obtain what they promise."

## **Secret and Postcommunion**

The Secret is as follows: "Grant us, we beseech thee, O Lord, to be fittingly prepared for the offering of these gifts, and, through the mysteries of the most holy Rosary, so to meditate upon the life, Passion, and glory of Thine only-begotten Son, that we may become worthy of His promises."

The Postcommunion reads: "May we be assisted, we beseech Thee, O Lord, by the prayers of Thy most holy Mother, whose Rosary we celebrate, that the virtue of the mysteries we adore may be enjoyed and the effect of the sacraments we have received may be obtained."

All graces and helps which come to us through the devotion to the rosary, the prayers stress once again, we hope to obtain from Jesus,

the Source of all grace, through the intercession of Mary, His Mother. Accordingly, the rosary is presented in Collect, Secret prayer, Postcommunion, all taken together, as a devotion which is based on the mysteries of the life, death, and glorification of the Lord. The mysteries are to be reflected upon intimately, and the question is to be placed before us how we can imitate the life of Jesus in our own, and so make ourselves worthy to partake of His glory in heaven. At the same time, we beseech Mary in the rosary because the Mother of Jesus has most influence with Him. Time and again we turn to her with the words of that greeting with which the angel saluted her at Nazareth, and we add the petition that she intercede with Jesus for us.

One thought is impressed upon us in the Mass of this feast as in few others: prayer itself is a grace, and since it is a grace, we must beseech God that we may be able to pray well. Yes, that is the special concern of the Church on the feast of the Holy Rosary: she prays that the faithful learn to pray the rosary well, or continue to pray it well.

### **The Epistle and Gospel**

The Epistle has a number of solemn utterances of the divine Wisdom about itself. The Church places them on the lips of the Mother of God and has Mary herself announce her position in God's plan of salvation. The words are: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived." (Proverbs 8:22-24)

Among all the decrees of Divine Wisdom concerning individual men, the decree to make Mary the Mother of the Saviour ranks immediately after that relating to Christ. Mary served the divine counsel most faithfully, and by her obedience became the "Mother of Wisdom."

The one who prays should therefore have Mary as his guide in the mysteries of the life, death, and glorification of the Lord. He should ask her to make known to him how he can imitate the life of Jesus in his own life. He should beseech her to intercede for him with

God for the grace to follow the enlightenment he receives from her. He who has Mary for his guide is well counselled. For this reason the Church places these words on Mary's lips: "Now therefore, ye children, hear me: blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates: and waiteth at the posts of my doors. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." (Proverbs 8:32-35)

The Gospel for this feast is the same as many others in Mary's honor - the narrative of the Annunciation. Nevertheless, on this feast day there is one sentence which challenges us: "Hail, full of grace," for this greeting one constantly repeats in the rosary.

### **Offertory and Communion**

The Offertory and the Communion speak of flowers. A play on the word rosary is suggested, and it is conceived in its ancient spiritual sense. The Offertory presents Mary as the great intercessor who, through the rosary, distributes the roses which have blossomed forth in her own spiritual life. The Church has her say: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Like a rose planted on the rivers I have borne fruit."

The Communion verse employs the figure of the blossoming of flowers in order to lend joyous encouragement to the praying of the rosary. The very soul of this devotion consists in the thankful and loving meditation on the highest works of God, the mystery of the Redemption: "Send forth flowers, as the lily, and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace, and praise with canticles, and bless the Lord in His works."

A tone of joy characterizes the Mass throughout. But it is not mere sentiment. The basic and solid elements are clearly emphasized. This is very important for our study. A slow and progressive development throughout several centuries brought the devotion to that perfect completion which is apparent in these liturgical prayers. Subsequent periods produced little literature which is as clear in presenting fundamentals as these prayers, despite their brevity.



We may be pardoned for summing up these elements again:

1. Both vocal and mental prayer belong to the rosary.
2. The rosary is a devotion which does not terminate in the veneration of the Mother of God, but passes from Mary to her Son.
3. The rosary is a prayer of petition in which we ask for that which the mysteries promise.
4. The rosary is a prayer which is to be said, not merely now and then, but frequently; hence it should be a part of our daily routine.
5. From the rosary prayer we should draw the strength to live according to the Gospels.

# **The Voice of the Saints. The Rosary in its Classical Period: Instruction of the Faithful. The Writings of Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716)**

Louis Grignion de Montfort, who was solemnly canonized on July 20, 1947, wrote a book about the rosary in his time, but because of the Jansenistic disturbances it failed to impress the age, and later on was completely forgotten. It was printed for the first time in 1911, more than two hundred years after the death of its author. In the year 1920 a German translation of the original French appeared. The publication of this work opened up a very valuable treasure of information for the history of the rosary.

It was the classical period of the rosary, and Saint Louis tells us about the practice as an approved devotion in the Church. We learn about its form and get an insight into the instruction of the faithful. The Saint incorporates the old tradition by borrowing from the writings of Alain de la Roche, and thereby sheds light on the story of the development in the important period from 1700 back to 1500, when the first ecclesiastical Confraternity of the Rosary was founded.

The work, however, has far more than a mere academic significance. It goes far beyond mere research. We might say that it contains everything that can be said about the rosary, about its content and form, its real worth, about the instruction necessary for its appreciation and use. De Montfort already recognized and dealt with all the difficulties connected with the praying of the rosary and with the prejudices against it, which latter are quite frequently much better known than the prayer itself. Obviously, the work of Saint Louis is old, but far from out of date, even though its publication was so long delayed.

A comparison of the rosary, as Saint Louis knew it, with the devotion as practiced in the care of souls and in Christian guidance today, where it is maintained at its best, makes one point clear: the

period of the Enlightenment, though it could combat the devotion, could not destroy it. But it did succeed in ruining what was most appropriate and noble in it. The soul of the devotion, as exemplified in the previous period and also in the period after the Enlightenment, consisted in having the inner and outer world of the mysteries before one's eyes and viewing all earthly things from this world of the spiritual. Those who had the care of souls regularly instructed the faithful in this matter, but this methodic public instruction of the faithful in the rosary did not continue after the Enlightenment, although there was a very great emphasis on instruction in other matters.

Saint Louis gives the following as the fundamentals of the devotion:

1. Mental prayer is as essential as vocal prayer: the pertinent explanations of the Saint are models of lucidity. They seem like a learned treatise from an encyclopedia. Note the following: "The rosary includes two things, namely, mental prayer and vocal prayer. Mental prayer in the holy rosary is naught save meditation on the principal mysteries of the life, death, and glory of Jesus Christ and His most Holy Mother. The vocal prayer consists in reciting the decade of Hail Marys and the one Our Father fifteen times, as one meditates. The meditation places before one's eyes the fifteen main virtues which Jesus and Mary practiced in the fifteen mysteries of the holy rosary. Here we have a holy bond of mental and vocal prayer in veneration and imitation of the mysteries of the life and the death, the Passion and the glorification of Jesus and Mary."

The Saint often explains the form and method of the meditation on the mysteries. In this chapter we offer a few of these explanations:

A mystery is something holy and difficult to understand. The works of Jesus Christ are all sacred and divine because He is both God and man. Those of the Blessed Virgin are also very holy, for she is the most perfect of all creatures. The works of Jesus and Mary are truly mysteries, for they are wonderful and most perfect. They are the sublime and exalted means by which the Holy Ghost instructs the humble and simple souls who venerate these mysteries.

The life of Jesus and Mary is divided into mysteries which present their virtues and their most important acts as in a picture whose line and color should be a model and rule for us in our own lives. The mysteries of the rosary are like fifteen torchlights which guide our steps here below. They are like the shining mirrors in which we learn to see and know Jesus and Mary and ourselves, and by which the fire of their love is enkindled in our hearts. They are like fifteen ardent furnaces which consume us in their heavenly fire.

Our soul is a blank canvas on which we must paint. The virtues are the colors which should be clear and bright. The model before us is Jesus Christ, the living and perfect Image of the Eternal Father. Just as the artist, who wishes to produce a natural likeness, has the model before him and looks at it before every stroke of the brush, so must the Christian have before his eyes the life and virtues of Jesus Christ, so as not to say anything, think anything, or do anything that is not in conformity with Him.

Children imitate their parents by looking at them and living with them; they learn to speak by listening to them; an apprentice learns his craft by watching his master work. In like manner, those who say the rosary faithfully and meditate devoutly and seriously on the virtues of Jesus Christ in the fifteen mysteries of His life, will become like the Divine Master, with the help of divine grace and through the intercession of Mary.

Pondering on the mysteries and the prayers of the rosary is the easiest of all, because the number and variety of the virtues and events in the life of Jesus Christ, which one studies, refresh and strengthen the spirit wonderfully and shut out distractions. The learned find in the formulas the most profound

doctrine, and the uneducated the simplest instruction. One must pass through this easy way of meditation before being raised to the highest degree of contemplation.

According to our Saint, the rosary is a prayer to Jesus and Mary, to which belong: vocal prayer; reflection on the historical content of the mystery; establishment of the relations between the life of Jesus, the life of Mary, and one's own life; and the petition to Mary for her intercession with God.

In the light of the foregoing, Saint Louis gives the instruction: "Before each decade pause for a moment thoughtfully; measure the time according to the amount at your disposal. Ponder the mystery which you are to venerate in the following decade and always ask, by the mystery and the intercession of the Mother of all graces, for one of the virtues taught by the mystery which you need most."

No matter how insistent he may be in stressing the meditation, the Saint still maintains firmly that inner reflection and vocal prayer are to be joined, and that complete neglect of vocal prayer, as a matter of principle, is fraught with danger. "I admit," he says, "that when one devotes oneself to these divine prayers, which are the support, strength, and shield of the soul, it may not be necessary to pray them vocally, and that the interior prayer in a certain sense is more perfect than the vocal; but I also maintain that it is very dangerous, not to say fatal, to give up vocal prayer of the rosary by one's own authority on the plea of seeking a more perfect union with God. Believe me, my dear brethren, if you seek a high degree of contemplation without falling prey to affectations of piety and deceits of the devil, which are so abundant for mystical souls, pray the entire psalter every day if you can, or at least recite one rosary."

2. The rosary is a devotion to "Jesus and His Mother Mary." This thought is so vividly present in the Saint's mind that he never fails to recur to it at every turn in his work. The rosary is "the meditation on the most important mysteries of the life, the death, and the glory of Jesus Christ and His Mother." It is the devotion by which "we honor and imitate the mysteries of the life and death and the glorification of Jesus and Mary." It is the "psalter of Jesus and Mary," and "the most glorious prayer of Jesus and Mary."

3. The rosary is, above all, a prayer of petition brought to the throne of Jesus through Mary. It is preferable to all other prayers as a means of bringing our petitions to God. When using such superlatives, Saint Louis is not unmindful of the value of the Holy Mass, but he is thinking of it as a sacrifice rather than as a prayer. He cannot conceive of a rosary prayer that is not bound up with specific petitions for specific graces for oneself and for others, which are inspired by Mary and by her placed before God. For this reason, merely reciting the prayer without specific intention is one of the two main defects in the recitation.

4. The writings of De Montfort contain a variety of instructions about the relation of the devotion to a Christian order of the day. He lays down the following propositions:

*One should pray the rosary every day.*

Whoever thinks seriously about the command of Jesus Christ that we should pray always and perseveringly, as He Himself prayed; whoever realizes how great is our need of prayer to enable us to face our enemies, will certainly not be content with saying the psalter once a year or once a week, as the rule of the confraternity prescribes, but he will say it daily without exception. He will do this, although he is not obliged to do so, except in so far as he is obliged to seek his soul's salvation.

*The rosary should be prayed in common every day.*

No manner of saying the rosary gives more glory to God, is more profitable for our soul and more dreaded by the devil than to say it in common, publicly, for God loves to see us assembled in prayer. All the angels and blessed who are assembled in heaven sing His praises ceaselessly. The just, who are gathered together in various congregations and societies on earth, pray in common day and night. The Divine Saviour expressly recommended this practice to His apostles and disciples and promised them that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them. What good fortune it is to have Jesus Christ in our company! To enjoy it we need only say the rosary in, common.

When we pray in common, the prayers of each individual become

the property of the whole group and together form one single prayer. If, therefore, one does not pray well, another of the group who prays better is counted in his stead. The strong sustain the weak, the fervent enkindle the lukewarm, the rich relieve the poor, the evil disappear among the good. How are shoddy goods sold? Simply by being mixed with the good wares so as to pass unnoticed. Rotten apples are put at the bottom of the measure or mixed with the good.

If you live near the parish church or near a chapel, go there at least every evening, in order to pray the rosary in common and alternately. Seek the permission of the rector of the church, and in union with all the others of like mind, pray in a group. If there is no church near at hand, say the prayers in your own home or in someone else's home in the neighborhood.

5. Saint Louis does not consider the daily rosary said in common as in itself the highest objective, the very term of Christian perfection. For him it is simply a real and practical part of the Christian order of life, which manifests itself in frequent reception of the sacraments, in the genuine practice of virtue, and in every kind of good work.

He strove to promote membership in the Confraternity of the Rosary, not so much because the members were bound by the regulations to recite the psalter once every week - this was scarcely enough for him - but because at that time the confraternity rules obliged the members to many good works. They were to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month. Similarly, there was a procession every Sunday of the month in honor of Mary, and prayers were offered for the intentions of the Holy Father. There were similar processions on the Marian feasts. The confraternity furnished the dowry for maidens who entered the convent or were to be married. The members were encouraged to accompany the Blessed Sacrament when it was taken to the sick.

Thus, the monthly Sunday became Mary's day, the center not only of Christian veneration of the Blessed Virgin, but of the whole Christian life. Here we have one of the principal sources of spiritual recovery for the people from the disorders and degradation of the

Thirty Years' War. Here we see the means of spiritual renewal and rejuvenation.

Though the Saint testifies from his own experience to the good results in his own country, the same is true of the Germanic countries. Concluding his words of encouragement, he describes the blessings wrought under his very eyes:

This is the holy practice which God in His mercy established in those places where I gave missions, in order to preserve and increase their fruits and to prevent sin. Before the rosary was said in common in those towns and cities, dancing, carousing, lewdness, cursing, quarreling and enmities were rife; one could hear nothing but bad songs and immoral jokes. Now we hear only the song of songs, the psalmody of the Our Father and the Hail Mary. You will see people assembled in groups of twenty, thirty, or a hundred or more singing the praises of God like Religious in the convents at set hours of the day. In some places, even, the rosary is said in common three times at different hours of the day. What a heavenly blessing!

When we hear reports of religious and moral transformation, we may be tempted to dismiss them as so many wild and incredible statements. Or if such things did ever take place, they belong to past ages. They are no longer possible today. Nevertheless, the testimony of De Montfort for his day and country finds a perfect parallel in the testimony given very publicly in a national pastoral letter by the Bishops of Portugal in 1943, on occasion of the jubilee of the apparition of Mary at Fatima.

Without any fear of contradiction the prelates could make the statement before all the people of Portugal: "If any one had closed his eyes twenty-five years ago, and now only opened them again, he would be unable to recognize Portugal, so profound and so thoroughgoing is the change produced by the gentle and mysterious influence of the apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin at Fatima."

What happened in the days of Saint Louis, days which we reckon as



belonging to the Middle Ages, may just as well happen in the age of the machine. Saint Louis was not unaware of the many prejudices against the rosary. The prejudices of his time, his writings show, were essentially the same as those today, three hundred years later. Presumably, time makes no difference in this matter at all.

Since the rosary occupies a middle ground between the highest form of prayer and the simpler forms, Saint Louis considers it the median prayer, the prayer of the Christian community, in which higher and lower classes should join. According to Saint Grignon, the prejudices among the educated are founded in their desire to break away from the group, whether it be that they do not wish to recite the prayer at all, or not with the others. The Saint presents the views of the critics of his day in such vivid style that one imagines hearing them first-hand:

"Why does this fellow always mumble rosaries? What sloth! He does nothing but recite rosaries. He would do better to work instead of devoting himself to such pietistic practice. Yes, indeed. All one has to do is say the rosary, and roasted fowl will fly into one's mouth! The rosary doesn't provide us with bread! The saying goes, 'God helps those who help themselves!' Why burden one's self with so many prayers? A short prayer pierces the clouds; an Our Father and Hail Mary, devoutly prayed, is enough.

"The good Lord did not command us to pray the rosary; it is good to recite it, if one has leisure, but one can get to heaven without it. How many men never prayed the rosary, and yet have become saints! There are always people who demand that the whole world should accept their standards, and should conform itself to them.

"Pray the rosary; isn't it better to say the Office of the Blessed Virgin or the Seven Penitential Psalms? Is there anything more beautiful than these Psalms inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself? You try to pray a whole psalter daily? A resolution as fleeting

as burning straw, which vanishes into smoke in a moment. Is it not better to attempt less and keep at it faithfully?

"Quit saying the rosary! That is the cause of your headache! Quit saying the rosary! The recitation does not oblige under sin! At least don't say more than a portion of it. Your suffering is a sign that God does not wish to have you pray the rosary! You may take it up again tomorrow; pray it tomorrow, when you are better disposed!

"What is the idea, why are you lugging such a huge rosary about with you? Or why carry it on your girdle? What hypocrisy! I'd advise you to carry it about your throat, as the Spaniards do! They are really devout in praying the rosary! They carry a big rosary in one hand, and a dagger in the other to knife some one in the back. Drop these external devotions; true devotion is in the heart.

"The daily rosary has so many enemies that I look upon it as an extraordinary manifestation of God's grace to persevere in its recitation until death."

At the time there were priests opposing the practice, no doubt because of Jansenistic tendencies. The Saint has this to say about them: "Many otherwise thoroughly good and learned men, but possessed of a pride which criticizes everything, will scarcely advise you to pray the rosary. They will rather suggest the Seven Penitential Psalms, or some other prayers. If a good confessor has given you a psalter as penance, which you are to pray for two weeks or a month, you need only confess to one of these priests, and your penance will be commuted into some other prayers - fasts, Masses or alms. If the false mystics of our time, or the quietists had followed the advice to pray the rosary daily, they would not have fallen so dreadfully low, nor would they have caused such scandal among the pious souls."

The Saint distinguished between those who, from inner aversion for the rosary, gave up the recitation, and those who without such

difficulty complained about the demands made upon them by this prayer. He was himself thoroughly acquainted with the special difficulties involved. He took a more serious view of them than did many preachers of his age. "Many current sermons merely tended to excite wonder without imparting any solid instruction." Many a preacher today could learn something on this point from him. In the mind of Grignon de Montfort the rosary prayer is "the simplest form of meditation" and also the "most difficult vocal prayer."

No prayer gains greater merit for the soul. None is more glorious to Jesus and Mary than the rosary recited well. But in no prayer does one encounter greater difficulties in the recitation. In no prayer is there such difficulty in persevering.

If one recites the Little Hours of the Blessed Virgin, or the Seven Penitential Psalms, or prayers other than the rosary, the variation or diversity of expression in the composition helps concentration and arouses interest, and in consequence it is easier to say the prayers well. But in the rosary the constant recitation of the same Our Father and Hail Mary and the constant repetition of the same form make it difficult to avoid monotony. In consequence, the rosary is readily dropped in favor of other prayers, which are likely to excite attention and avoid boredom. In prayer of this kind much more devotion is necessary to persevere than in any other, even though it be the Davidic psalter. And making the prayer still more difficult, there is our unstable imagination, which never remains fixed a single moment, and the malice of the devil, who seeks without repose to distract us and interfere with our prayers. He will stop short of nothing to oppose us while we are praying our rosary to combat him. And after we have come to the end of the prayer, despite great effort and many distractions, he whispers in our ear: "What you have just prayed is entirely worthless: your rosary is worth nothing! It would be better for you to do

your work and take care of your business. You merely waste your time reciting so many verbal and vapid prayers. A half hour spent in meditation or in spiritual reading would do you much more good. Tomorrow, when you are fully awake, you will be able to pray with more attention; postpone the rest of your rosary until tomorrow!"

By such craft the devil often accomplishes his designs. The result, in some instances, is the giving up of the rosary entirely, or in part. In some cases the rosary will be postponed, or some other prayer will be recited instead.

Lend no credence to the devil, my dear brother, take courage, even though your fancy was crowded with distractions during the whole recitation. That matters nothing if only you have sought as well as you could to drive them away as soon as you noticed them. Your rosary is so much the better, so much more meritorious, the more difficult it is. It is the more difficult the less pleasant it is to the soul in a natural way and the more it is disturbed by miserable distractions, which against our will dart hither and thither in our fantasy like little fleas and ants, and leave no time to the soul to enjoy the taste of prayer and peace and quiet.

If you must fight throughout the whole rosary against the assault of distractions, then fight bravely with the weapons in your hands and continue with your prayer. Courage, therefore, faithful servant of Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother, who have formed the resolution to pray the rosary daily! The host of fleas, so I call the distractions, which swarm against you during the prayer, should not succeed in making you cravenly desert the company of Jesus and Mary, which you enjoy during the recitation of the rosary.

If we grasp the elements of the rosary devotion as Saint Louis

elaborated them and state them axiomatically, the result is as follows:

1. Both vocal prayer and meditation on the mysteries belong to it.
2. The rosary is a prayer which, from and in union with Mary, leads to Jesus.
3. The rosary is not merely a prayer of petition for personal or individual needs, but the communal petition of all men for all men.
4. The rosary should become a part of the daily order of our life, a part of the week-day and the workday.
5. The rosary as a daily prayer should lead to worthy reception of the Holy Sacraments.

In the conclusion of his little book on the rosary, Saint Louis takes up the question how the rosary should actually be recited. He cited two methods: his preference is for an arrangement with a short prayer before the Hail Marys containing the "intention." A still shorter prayer, repeating the same intention, should then follow the decade. The other method is the one now in use. The Saint is acquainted with it, but does not favor it.

The intention-prayers of the Saint are the fruit of years of personal practice of the devotion and the result of unwearied efforts in the care of souls, in bringing others to the same practice. Since these prayers have not ceased to be practical even today, we repeat them here:

## **The Prayer-Intentions of Saint Louis de Montfort**

### **The Joyful Mysteries**

#### *The First Mystery*

Whom thou, O Virgin, didst conceive of the Holy Ghost.

*intention:* pray for humility.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer up to Thee, O

Lord Jesus Christ, this first decade, in honor of Thy Incarnation, and beseech Thee by this mystery and through the intercession of Thy most Holy Mother for a deep humility of heart.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the Incarnation descend into my soul and make it truly humble.

\*

### *The Second Mystery*

Whom thou, O Virgin, didst bear with thee to Elizabeth.

*intention:* pray for love of neighbor.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, this second decade in honor of the visit of Thy Most Holy Mother to her cousin Elizabeth, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Mary, for perfect love of neighbor.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the Visitation descend into my soul and make it truly charitable.

\*

### *The Third Mystery*

Who was born to thee, O Virgin.

*intention:* pray for contempt of riches and love of poverty.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Divine Infant Jesus, this third decade in honor of Thy Holy Birth, and we beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for detachment from worldly goods, for the love of poverty and the poor.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the birth of Jesus descend into my soul and make it truly

poor in spirit.

\*

### *The Fourth Mystery*

Whom Thou, O Virgin, didst offer in the Temple.

*intention:* pray for purity of both body and soul.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fourth mystery in honor of Thy presentation in the Temple through the hands of Mary, and we beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for the gift of wisdom and purity of heart and body.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the purification of Mary descend into my soul and make it truly wise and pure.

\*

### *The Fifth Mystery*

Whom thou, O Virgin, didst find in the Temple.

*intention:* pray for true conversion.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fifth decade in honor of Mary's finding Thee in the midst of the doctors, after she had lost Thee, and we beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for our conversion and the conversion of sinners, who live in heresy, schism, and infidelity.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the finding of Jesus in the Temple descend into my soul and truly convert it.

\* \* \*

## **The Sorrowful Mysteries**

### *The First Mystery*

Who sweat blood for us.

*intention:* pray for contrition.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this first decade in honor of Thy agony on Mount Olivet, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for true sorrow for our sins and perfect conformity to Thy holy will.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the agony of Jesus descend into my soul and make it truly contrite and conformed to the will of God.

\*

### *The Second Mystery*

Who was scourged for us.

*intention:* pray for mortification of the senses.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this second decade in honor of Thy bloody scourging, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for perfect mortification of our senses.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the scourging of Jesus descend into my soul and make it truly mortified.

\*

### *The Third Mystery*

Who was crowned with thorns for us.

*intention:* pray for contempt of the world.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord



Jesus, this third decade in honor of Thy cruel crowning with thorns, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for a great contempt of the world.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the crowning with thorns descend into my soul and make it truly despise the world.

\*

### *The Fourth Mystery*

Who carried the heavy cross for us.

*intention:* pray for patience in suffering.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fourth decade in honor of Thy carrying the cross, and we beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for great patience in carrying our cross after Thee all the days of our life.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of Thy carrying of the cross descend into my soul and make it truly patient.

\*

### *The Fifth Mystery*

Who was crucified for us.

*intention:* pray for a happy death.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fifth decade in honor of Thy crucifixion on Mt. Calvary, and beseech Thee by this mystery and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for a great horror of sin, love of the cross and a happy death for us and all who are now dying.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ descend into my

soul and make it truly holy.

\* \* \*

## **The Glorious Mysteries**

### *The First Mystery*

Who arose from the dead.

*intention:* pray for love of God and apostolic zeal.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this first decade in honor of Thy glorious Resurrection, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for a living faith, for the love of Jesus and for apostolic fervor.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the Resurrection descend into my soul and fill it with true faith and ardent love.

\*

### *The Second Mystery*

Who ascended into heaven.

*intention:* pray for a burning desire for heaven.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this second decade in honor of Thy glorious Ascension, and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Thy Most Holy Mother, for a firm hope and a burning desire for heaven.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mystery of the Ascension of Jesus Christ descend into my soul and make it truly heavenly.

\*

### *The Third Mystery*

Who hath sent us the Holy Ghost.

*intention:* pray for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Holy Ghost, this third decade, in honor of the mystery of Pentecost and beseech Thee by this mystery, and through the intercession of Mary, Thy faithful Spouse, for divine wisdom, so that we may know the truth, relish it and practice it, and that all our fellow men may attain to it.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the gifts of the Pentecostal mystery descend into my soul and make it truly wise in the eyes of God.

\*

### *The Fourth Mystery*

Who hath assumed thee, O Virgin, into heaven.

*intention:* pray for love of Mary.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fourth decade in honor of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the body and soul of Thy Most Blessed Mother into heaven and beseech Thee by these two mysteries, and through the intercession of Mary, for a true devotion to her, so that we may live and die well.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* May the graces of the mysteries of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary into heaven descend into my soul and impart a perfect devotion to Mary.

\*

### *The Fifth Mystery*

Who hath crowned thee, O Virgin, in heaven.

*intention:* pray for perseverance in grace and the crown of glory.

*Prayer preceding the decade of Hail Marys:* We offer to Thee, O Lord Jesus, this fifth and last decade in honor of the glorious Coronation of Thy Most Holy Mother in heaven, and beseech Thee by this mystery and through her intercession, for perseverance and progress in virtue until death, and the eternal crown that is laid up for us in heaven. We beg for the same grace for all the just and all our benefactors.

*Prayer following the decade of Hail Marys:* We beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus, through the fifteen mysteries of Thy life, Passion and death, through Thy glory and the merits of Thy Most Holy Mother, that Thou deign to convert sinners, assist the dying, free the souls in purgatory, and grant us all the grace to live a holy life, die a good death, and finally see Thee face to face in heaven and love Thee for all eternity. Amen.

## **The Voice of the Popes. Papal Encyclicals from 1883 to 1942**

If, in our concluding remarks on the first flourishing period of the rosary devotion, we speak of "modern times," we refer to the period of Pope Leo XIII. It was characteristic of that period that the spirit of Enlightenment spread from the leaders to the circles of the common people who, in consequence, lost the sense of appreciation for any such devotion as the rosary, which was felt to be repetitious. To this must be added the fact that the constant and regular cultivation of the mental prayer of the rosary which, before the Enlightenment, had been an essential part of the popular care of souls, was not taken up and revived until the nineteenth century.

In this same period the Roman Pontiffs themselves lent the prestige of their exalted authority to the advancement of the practice and made it their concern to foster it. Leo XIII especially sought to promote it. It was a matter near to his heart and he did everything possible to maintain the rosary as a traditional popular prayer and to bring it back to the flourishing state where it had been before it lost the favor of the people. One encyclical followed on the other, all directed to this end. If we may trust oral testimony, there is an intimate connection between the encyclicals of Leo and the rosary book of Saint Louis de Montfort, which we mentioned in the preceding pages. During Pope Leo's pontificate the servant of God was beatified. On this occasion, the report says, the Pope became acquainted with his writings on the rosary, which proved a source of inspiration to him.

These encyclicals, certainly, have a deeper meaning than appears on the surface to us today, living as we do in an entirely different age. In those places where the rosary was still an ancient traditional prayer, they stiffened the resistance to destructive influences. An old priest once told of an event which illustrates this point very aptly. He had a neighbor, a fellow-priest, who had absolutely no comprehension of what lies within the rosary, of its inner depth. As this priest was somewhat bold and venturesome, he made up his mind to abolish it altogether in his parish. Not wishing to act

hastily, he sought to prepare the people's minds for the move. With great effort he started to prepare a series of sermons with this end in view. Not a man to seek the easiest way, he searched everywhere for materials and arguments to bolster up his position. He felt that the task was worth all the effort. Scarcely had he finished his labors, when a copy of the encyclical of Leo XIII arrived in his mail, the first encyclical on the rosary. When he compared the Pope's words with his own, there was only one point of agreement, both used the word rosary. The old tradition prevailed in the parish; the rosary continued to be recited.

The first encyclical appeared on 1 September 1883. In it the Pope describes the rosary as the prayer in which the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary finds its perfect expression. By means of it, the faithful should have recourse to the Mother of God in their own needs and in all the trials that afflict mankind. The Pope says: "We deem that there could be no surer and more efficacious means to this end than by religion and piety to obtain the favor of the great Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, the guardian of our peace and the minister to us of heavenly grace, who is placed on the highest summit of power and glory in heaven in order that she may bestow the help of her patronage on men who through so many labors and dangers are striving to reach that eternal city. . . .

"And truly the Immaculate Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of God and thereby associated with Him in the work of man's salvation, had a favor and power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained or ever can gain. And, as it is her greatest pleasure to grant her help and comfort to those who seek her protection, it cannot be doubted that she would deign, and even be anxious, to receive the aspirations of the Universal Church."

The following elements, according to the encyclical, constitute the rosary: the mysteries of our salvation are to be pondered in spirit. This may not be neglected. The meditations are bound up with the series of Hail Marys into a unity. Between the decades of Hail Marys, the prayer to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - the Our Father - is to be inserted.

It is the Pontiff's desire that the faithful say the rosary regularly and habitually, and not merely now and then. "We earnestly exhort all

Christians," he says, "to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the rosary publicly, or privately in their own home and family, and that unceasingly."

To these general instructions the Pope adds the specific directive that the month of October be dedicated and devoted to the heavenly "Queen of the Rosary." This regulation had as its objective the daily recitation of the rosary in the month of October under all conditions and circumstances. This is apparent from the repetition of the instruction in the year 1884, in which it is stated: "If the rosary and the Litany of Loreto are prayed in the morning, Holy Mass is to be said during the recitation; if they are recited in the afternoon, the Blessed Sacrament should be exposed for the recitation."

The encyclical of 30 August 1884, is a repetition, in different words, of the thought of the previous encyclical of the year 1883. The encyclical of 8 September 1892, emphasizes the truth that the rosary has the power to strengthen men in the faith and keep those who pray it in the Christian way of life. The encyclical published just a year later, 8 September 1893, gave a summary of the social effects of the rosary prayer.

Three sinister evils are at work today, the Pope explains, which, by contributing to the dissolution of social life, wreak unspeakable havoc on the common good: the first, repugnance for the simple and laborious life; the second, morbid aversion to every species of suffering and pain; the third, forgetfulness of the goods of the future life, which are the object of our Christian hope.

The Pope points out that the Joyful Mysteries make the Christian realize that earthly things cannot make man happy. The Sorrowful Mysteries reveal to him what blessings lie hidden in suffering. The Glorious Mysteries teach that a second life is bound up inwardly with this life. This second life unfolds only after death and then continues without end.

The encyclical of 8 September 1894, deals with the prayers and mysteries; it seeks to awaken a love for the rosary in the hearts of the faithful and to renew their confidence in it. Stress is laid on the fact that the rosary leads from Mary to Jesus, and from Jesus to the

Heavenly Father. The Pope appropriates the sentiment expressed by Saint Bernard of Siena: "Every grace which this world receives has a threefold source: in well-established harmony it comes from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin Mary, and from the Virgin Mary to us." The rosary prayer in its whole structure manifests this law of grace. First, we turn only to the Blessed Virgin Mary, calling upon her repeatedly. Then, encouraged by her, we turn to God the Father through Christ the Mediator.

The encyclical of 5 September 1895, tells us how the rosary has all the qualities of a good prayer. It is a prayer of perseverance, and yet not too long. It is a prayer for common recitation, a prayer of faith, a prayer of hope. This encyclical sums up the previous ones. "It has long been the desire of Our heart," the Pope says, "to place the salvation of human society securely under the protection of Mary as in an impregnable tower. Therefore We have constantly fostered with all Our power among the faithful the practice of praying the rosary of Mary and We have promulgated numerous encyclicals since 1883 with this purpose in mind."

In this same encyclical, in which the Pope declares that he will not refrain from going into the matter at great length, the basic features of the rosary devotion are especially well summarized. The rosary is a vocal prayer "*cum meditationis officio conjunctum*," a vocal prayer to which the meditation or pondering on the mysteries is joined. It is most suitable for ordinary people. To bring the sentiments of the encyclical to the people, he directs that the feast of the Rosary be raised to the rank of second class and that the invocation, "Queen of the Most Holy Rosary," be inserted in the Litany of Loreto.

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The encyclical of Pius XI of 29 September 1937, might be considered a completion of the encyclicals of Leo XIII. Says Pius XI: "Among the various prayers in which we successfully turn to the Virgin Mother of God, the rosary unquestionably enjoys a unique position. This prayer, which is also called the 'Marian Psalter' or the 'Breviary of the Gospel of the Christian Life,' is described by Our predecessor, Leo XIII, with forceful words and is most expressly recommended by him. It is a marvelous garland of flowers. It is woven with the words of the angel's greeting, interspersed with the



Lord's Prayer, bound up with appropriate meditations - in all a most excellent form of prayer."

This excellent prayer, says the Pope, is simple in the best sense of that word.

The Rosary is without doubt easy for all and also suitable for simple common people, who have not had any higher education. But only the grossest self-deception would lead some to look upon this prayer as a monotonous formula with endless repetitions of the same words, and, because it is suitable for women and children, reject it as unfitting for themselves. It is well to note that piety is like love: if love constantly repeats the same words, it still does not always say the same thing; for love, it is always something new. The repetition of the old words has indeed its source in a new upwelling of love.

This form of prayer is in harmony with that simplicity which the Gospel requires and with that true docility of spirit for which we must strive. The Lord Himself makes it very plain that we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven if we despise simplicity and the spirit of submission. "Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

Beguiled by the spirit of the times, the proud may sneer at the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary and cast it aside: but countless holy men of every age and state have treasured it and recited it with the deepest devotion. At all times they have used it as the mightiest weapon in the combat against the Evil Spirit, as the most secure means for the preservation of innocence, as efficient help in the attainment of perfection, and as the true source of peace for mankind. There have always been men in every age, men renowned for learning and wisdom,

who never permitted their interest in study and research to keep them from kneeling daily before the image of the Mother of God and turning to her in pious prayer. Kings and princes, despite distracting cares and tasks, have looked upon the practice as an honorable duty. The beads, like so many roses, slip through the fingers of the poor and simple, but they are also revered by all classes of men.

The spirit of man is stricken by the pursuit of worldly things: there is scarcely a thought of anything except fleeting wealth and pleasure. Those who practice this devotion will heed God's call and turn to the heavenly treasures "where no thief comes near, no moth consumes." (Luke 12:33)

The charity of many has grown weak, has turned cold in our age. But why should not those who pray the rosary well be inflamed with a new love for God? They meditate deeply on the Passion and death of Our Saviour and on the sorrows of His dolorous Mother, for this is part of saying the rosary well, and they should be stirred to charity again.

If we are moved in our hearts by the great Passion and pain of Christ, if we are sincerely affected by all that the Lord endured to lead men back to the lost inheritance of the children of God, then the sight of this divine love should inflame us with a burning love for our fellow men.

Fathers and mothers should give a good example in the spirit of prayer to their children. Especially in the evenings when the day's labors and occupations are over, and men gather in the privacy of their homes, the parents should assemble with their children before the holy image of their Heavenly Mother and pray the rosary together, united in prayer, faith, and love. The only result of this

wonderfully beautiful and profitable practice is joy and contentment filling the entire life of the family, and the gifts of heaven being bestowed upon it.

The Pope refers to the apparitions of the Mother of God at Lourdes, in which she approved this prayer: "We do not wish to pass over in silence the Blessed Virgin's most express approval of this form of prayer, given in this very age. When she appeared in the grotto of Lourdes, she taught the simple and innocent maiden this prayer by her example."

The encyclical of Pius XII of December, 1942, in which he consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, belongs in a way to the papal declarations on the rosary. In the solemn prayer of consecration he then enunciated that Mary is invoked not merely as the Mother of God, but also as the "Queen of the Rosary."

From these citations of the papal documents it is apparent that the Sovereign Pontiffs intervened in favor of the good old traditional prayer of the rosary. A study of their teaching, whether expressed in axiomatic brevity or lengthy exposition, reveals the following points as basic:

1. Both vocal prayer and reflection on the mysteries belong to the rosary.
2. Though it begins with Mary, it does not rest in her, but passes on to Jesus and His Father.
3. It is a prayer of petition, which the individual should recite for individual needs, the community for its necessities, and the entire body of the faithful for the welfare of the Church.
4. It is important to pray it regularly every day and to make it part of the daily order of Christian life.

5. By granting indulgences for the recitation of the rosary, the Popes seek to encourage the faithful to receive the holy sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, and thereby build up a Christian order of life, with this devotion as its beginning.

We may sum up all this in a few words: the Popes seek to restore the devotion to the prestige of its most flourishing period. They strive to retain or revive the old tradition.

The encyclical of Pius XI (1937), as noted above, directs attention to the apparition at Lourdes. The pertinent references are closely connected with what the Mother of God made known at Fatima. We refer to the summary given elsewhere in this book. Between Lourdes and Fatima there is a beautiful relationship: at Lourdes the Blessed Virgin called herself the Immaculate Conception, taking the same name which was used four years previously at the solemn dogmatic definition of her freedom from all sin, original and personal, and all inclination to sin. At Fatima, Mary referred to herself as "Queen of the Rosary," the title used by Leo XIII in opening his series of encyclicals, and which he ordered, in his encyclical of 1889, to be inserted into the Litany of Loreto.

# **The Language of Art. Mary Represented as Queen of the Rosary in Pictures. Mary with the Infant. Our Lady of Fatima, 1917**

Anyone who seeks an answer to the question: What did the faithful in olden times consider characteristic of the rosary as to form and substance? may not dismiss the pictures showing Mary's relation to the prayer. Painting, wood-carving, woodcut, or print, one thing is common to them all, down to the most recent times: the center of attention is Mary, the Mother of the Lord. She is enthroned as Queen under a canopy, or stands upon the half-moon as the Immaculate One, holding the Child Jesus in her arms.

Mary's special connection with the rosary is manifested in two distinct ways. In some pictures she herself hands a rosary to individual Saints, for instance, to Saint Dominic or Saint Catherine of Siena; or she presents it to representatives of various classes. The pictures focus attention on Mary's invitation to the faithful to pray the rosary. In other pictures, groups of Christians gather about her. Formed according to class or age, or some other distinctive characteristic, they are seen either praying the rosary or holding the beads up to Mary as children would do. They seem to say, "Look, look, we all pray the rosary!" These pictures manifest the devotion and confidence of the faithful. The rosary is for the faithful the prayer by which they manifest, maintain, and increase their love for Mary. There is one picture of this kind dating as far back as the year 1475; it is found in the rosary book of the Cologne Rosary Confraternity.

When Michelangelo painted the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, between the years 1534 and 1541, he placed, in the midst of a grandiose set of individual figures, a scene in which the two above-mentioned ideas are joined together. Mary draws up into heaven a sinner who is falling into the abyss. She throws her rosary out to him as a rope of safety, to which the man clings frantically, summoning all his efforts. In this scene Michelangelo expresses clearly the relationship of Mary to the rosary and its meaning for the individual. Since the painting was a part of the larger Last

Judgment picture, it could not be severed from the rest and reproduced independently. In consequence, no new kind of rosary pictures were derived from it. The artists of later days were content with reproducing the old models in every variation of color, garb, custom, and grouping.

One peculiarity of all the pictures in relation to the three rosaries in the psalter should not escape notice. The Mother of God with the Child Jesus in her arms or on her lap is more intimately bound up with the Joyful Mysteries than with the Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries. Mary with the Child Jesus is indeed a fitting picture for the five Joyful Mysteries, which embrace the childhood and youthful life of the Saviour. But she is not directly connected with the Sorrowful Mysteries, and thereby with the Mother of Sorrows under the Cross. And only a loose connection exists between her and the glorified Mary in heaven, where her Son is enthroned as High Priest at the right hand of the Father.

The picture of Mary with the Child on her lap, carefully studied, teaches the historic truth that Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, and was elevated to the highest dignity possible to a mere mortal. There is in pictures a good, worthy, and uncommonly attractive presentation of this historic truth. Even in the age before the rosary existed, there were many pictures of this kind. They all had something of an historic and factual background, as the adoration of the shepherds or, more commonly, the adoration of the Wise Men from the East. Even in the primitive Church this was a favorite theme. All the old pictures showing Mary and the Child made the faithful quite familiar with it. Now at the first glance they were able to catch the meaning of the new picture, which glorified Mary with the Child, as the Queen of the Rosary. But in all these centuries no artist succeeded in producing a painting showing Mary's relation to the psalter in such a way as to represent equally all three rosaries, Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious at the same time.

That there was an effort in the olden days to produce such an illustration, but without success, is shown by the frontispiece of the work, *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, from the year 1495, and the explanations given with it. The artist sought to bring all three rosaries - Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious - together on an equal footing

and simultaneously to relate the three to Mary. His efforts were directed to Mary's clients praying the rosary, not to the Mother of God herself. He simply produced three figures praying the rosary; one in white, one in red, one in gold or yellow. He placed a rosary in the hands of the Mother of God and in the hands of the Child Jesus. Since there was no other figure in the group and all three clients already had rosaries in their hands, the artist could not have had in mind that the two rosaries, in the hands of Jesus and Mary, were to be handed to the devout clients.

The following explanation is given by the author of the book: White signifies the purity of the Virgin. The client in white represents all those who pray the Joyful rosary: the reader should have him in mind when he prays the Joyful rosary. The red color reminds us of the heartfelt compassion of the Mother of God at the foot of the cross. The figure in red represents all those who pray the Sorrowful rosary. This should be kept in mind during its recitation. Yellow or gold symbolizes the "great joy and jubilation in heaven as Mary ascended above all the angelic choirs." The figure stands for all who recite the Glorious rosary.

The author of *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, telling of the meaning of the three clients and their white, red and golden garbs, was not at all ignorant of the language of edification. But he seems at a loss to explain the rosaries in the hands of Mary and the Child Jesus. They could not be handed to any one; there was no one to receive them. The writer advises the reader very simply "not to bother about them."

Our explanations of this picture do not arise from any concern for the history of art. We are concerned only with the religious meaning of the illustration. What we have said shows that there is no affinity between the ancient rosary pictures depicting Mother and Child, and the pictures of the Queen of the Rosary in which the Infant is absent.

Only the form and style in which the Mother of God manifested herself as the Queen of the Rosary at Fatima gave the answer to the question: how to depict Mary without the Child as the Queen of the Rosary. Mary appeared to the children at Fatima in a "long white robe, bordered with gold. Over the robe was thrown a mantle which

covered her head and reached to the hem of the robe. Her hands were folded as in prayer over her breast, and over the right hand was a rosary, which hung down on the robe. The beads of the rosary were white. With the rosary folded over her hands, the Lady looked down upon the children and by attitude and gestures contrived to say: 'All petitions which you present to me through the rosary I will take up in my folded hands, and in my praying hands lift them up as my own petitions to Jesus, my Son and your Saviour.'

The children testified that the Mother of God did not herself count the beads in her hands and recite the rosary. They expressly stated that she did not make the sign of the cross, nor recite the words, nor tell the beads, nor did the beads slip through her fingers. Five times she appeared to the children in this manner without answering their question as to who she was. But she promised them that in the sixth appearance, in October, she would give her name. Finally, in October she explicitly told them that she was the "Queen of the Rosary." This title implies a three-fold relationship, that of Mary to Jesus, of Mary to us, and of us to her.

The rosary in her hands symbolizes her power of intercession, which Jesus granted her in heaven, and which she now exercises at His side, as Queen and Mother before the Throne. The rosary in her hands is the symbol of motherly love for all men, who were redeemed through the suffering and death of her Son. She intercedes with Him for all men on earth. The rosary in her hands reminds the faithful that there is no prayer better suited to manifest their love for Mary, no prayer by which they can honor her more.

The ultimate basis for the title chosen by Mary, "Queen of the Rosary," is found in the last mystery: "Who crowned thee, O Virgin, in heaven." It calls to mind the solemn hour when the Son of God, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, sitting at the right of the Father in glory, the work of the Redemption accomplished, placed upon the head of His Mother Mary - Mother and Servant - Advocate of mankind - the regal crown.

Historically, the title of the fifth mystery of the Glorious rosary and the invocations of Mary as "Queen of the Angels, of Patriarchs," etc., as we know them in the Litany of Loreto, are derived from certain



primitive forms of the litany in vogue in Italy.

A close scrutiny of the two pictures, Mary with the Child as Queen of the Rosary, and the Fatima representation of the Mother of God, brings out clearly the differences between them. The picture of Mary with the Infant points to the past, to the time when Jesus, the Infant Son of God, sat on the lap of His Mother. The Fatima figure by its form and its attitude manifests the intercessory activity of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as now exercised for us all. This picture deals with what is being done now; a present activity indeed is indicated, but grasped by faith. The comparison of the two is not designed to play one against the other, not to make the one as better than the other, or to prove that either is the only right one. It should simply help us to understand the peculiar perfections of both.

Both impress the beholder with what is fundamental to the rosary: it is a devotion to Jesus and Mary. It is a prayer of petition. It is a community or common prayer. The relation to the Christian order, or to the order of the day and the whole Christian order of life, cannot easily be depicted by mere images.

# The Language of Mysticism. The Message of Fatima

For some of the faithful, the whole case for the rosary seems to rest on the apparitions at Fatima. For others, the spirit of contradiction is aroused at the bare mention of Fatima. Both positions are extremes. The remarkable and surprising thing about the apparitions at Fatima was that Mary revealed nothing novel and surprising about the rosary. Mary held to the old tradition. As to actual private revelation, we shall not attempt to make any basic decision; we merely pose the question: To what extent did the actual revelation mingle with interior visualization in the things which the children, and particularly Lucy, made known? How difficult it is to differentiate in such cases and to make fine discriminating judgments on all points is shown in Saint John Bosco's testimony about his own visions.

The actual events at Fatima must be the determining factor in any over-all judgment of the apparitions: On 13 October 1917, the day of the miracle predicted by the children, there actually occurred an extraordinary manifestation of light witnessed by 70,000 people, for which no natural explanation was even so much as attempted. This phenomenon and the religious renovation that followed in Portugal are the important facts for the formation of our judgment. As to apparitions and private revelations, the words of the Lord are valid: "By their fruits shall you know them."

Forming a picture based on a summary of all the statements of Mary from every accessible source, we have the very likeness of the picture delineated in the foregoing pages. There is nothing far-fetched in our comparison: the words, wishes, instructions of the Blessed Virgin agree perfectly with the pattern we studied in the writings of Saint Grignon de Montfort and the encyclicals of the Pontiffs.

1. The Blessed Mother left no doubt that the rosary must combine both mental and vocal prayer. At one of the apparitions she spoke of the meditation on the mysteries as an actual part of the rosary,

parallel to the vocal prayer. She was even more explicit in another apparition when she explained the nature of the meditation. One might pray the rosary orally, she said, and in pondering the mysteries "keep her company" for a quarter hour.

To get a clearer notion of the term "keep her company," we should associate it with meeting a dignitary or an exalted personage. There is the meeting which we call an "audience," a meeting of a very dignified kind. Then there is the presenting of a "petition," which is on a lower level. For the audience, one must be "announced" and await the pleasure of the great man before being admitted to his presence. Neither the time allotted for the audience nor the topic to be discussed is left to the discretion of the visitor. On the other hand, one presents a petition only to seek help from someone in a position of power or influence. The visit and the discussion are concerned with this point alone. The one making the petition leaves as soon as he has made his request, and is probably glad to depart.

Between the two, the "audience" and the "presenting of a petition," we place "keeping Our Lady company." The latter has two features not found in the others, for here, the great personage forgets his importance and takes the visitor to his heart, seeks to share his joy and sorrow, and the visitor in turn is filled with a spirit of confidence which erases the difference of station and power. He does not hesitate to form an attachment nor to ask for a favor, or at least suggest some exercise of influence with other men of power and rank.

Applied to meeting or visiting our Mother Mary, the Lady who called herself the "Queen of the Rosary," the term "keep her company," as she used it, means that Mary with motherly tenderness hearkens to everyone who presents himself to her in spirit. With joy she accepts the prayers of her clients - the fruit of that spiritual dialogue with her - and presents them before the throne of her Son, for she is Mother to both. He was born in her really and bodily; we are born to her spiritually. For this reason the faithful should greet Mary respectfully and hearken to her with a deep inner attention. But they should not hesitate to speak freely to Mary and try to make clear in the conversation with her what it is they need. In a word, they should act as true children of the

Heavenly Queen, speaking to her as to their Mother.

"Keeping her company" takes on another special meaning from the context in which Mary uses the term. Very often it means all that a visit implies to one who is lonely and neglected. So great is the love of the Mother of God for her children that it embraces all mankind, and those who come to visit her are always too few. Enough for her would mean that all the children in the world come to her. Only then would her loving heart be satisfied. But in reality many do not come to her at all, do not bother about her at all; in fact, they press a crown of thorns onto her heart. Under such circumstances the "company" of the true and faithful children is a consolation for her, a compensation for the neglect of so many others.

The expression "company" recalls a turn of thought, to which we shall revert later, found in the book of De Montfort. He also says that one who recites the rosary is in the society of Jesus and Mary. But the word is really not his own coinage. It is closely related to the Latin word, colloquium, meaning "colloquy" or "dialogue," a term occurring in the Ignatian method of meditation. The word colloquium was already used by Saint Augustine in this sense. The third Lesson for the vigil of the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle (autumnal part of the breviary), from Saint Augustine's pen, contains an admonition to build in our hearts a house for the Lord, "where He may come and teach us, and hold colloquy with us."

In pondering the mysteries, we have a quarter hour of companionship with Mary, provided we meditate for fifteen minutes on the mysteries and then recite the vocal prayers, and likewise if we meditate on each of the five mysteries for three minutes, dwelling on their content and significance. This is true both for private and public prayer. The reciter may either read or speak for fifteen minutes on the mysteries before reciting the vocal prayers, or he may devote three minutes to the meditation on each individual mystery before reciting the prayers of each decade.

2. Mary regards the rosary as a prayer which leads to Jesus. She taught the children at Fatima a prayer of her own to be recited when they prayed to Jesus for others. In Portuguese it reads: "O me Jesus, perdoai-nos e livrai-nos do fogo do inferno! Levai as alminhas todas para o céu, principalmente aquelas, que mais d'ele

precisarem!" Translated these words mean:

O my Jesus, pardon us!  
Save us from the fires of hell!  
Lead all souls to heaven,  
Grant help especially to those  
Who most stand in need of it!

The Mother of God used the word, *alminha*, in Portuguese, a term of endearment like "dear soul" or "tender soul," instead of *alma*, soul.

Evidently these words of petition make the rosary a prayer of petition for others, not merely for our own needs. But the words are significant from another aspect. Whoever appends this little petition to the rosary according to the instruction of the Mother of God, will readily come to look upon the rosary as more than a devotion in honor of Mary. Rather will he consider it a devotion to Jesus, the Saviour, and to Mary, His Mother, through the mysteries of the earthly life of Jesus, which are mysteries of both the Saviour's life and that of His Mother.

The object of the rosary prayer is not Mary, the Mother of God, but Jesus Christ, the source of all grace. Mary leads us to the goal by bearing our petitions to Jesus.

3. Mary expressed the wish that the rosary be recited as a petition with specific intentions. She explicitly asked that it be recited not merely for one's own needs, but, in the spirit of the mystical Body of Christ, especially for others. It should be the prayer of the faithful for their brethren in Christ and recited with specific intentions. She urges the Fatima children to pray for sinners, and for the end of the war. She taught them a prayer whose dominant note is expiation: "O God, I believe in Thee, I adore Thee, I hope in Thee, and I love Thee. Pardon those who do not believe in Thee, do not adore Thee, do not hope in Thee, and do not love Thee."

There is a similarity in form between this prayer and another long since in use, the threefold act preceding or following the five decades as now recited: "Increase our faith, strengthen our hope, inflame our hearts with divine love." When they recite it according to the wishes of Mary for the conversion of sinners, many of the

faithful place the prayer at the beginning of the entire rosary psalter.

The rosary becomes a prayer of petition for others when the following is inserted immediately after the Hail Marys, before the Glory be to the Father:

O my Jesus, pardon us!  
Save us from the fires of hell!  
Lead all souls to heaven.  
Grant help especially to those  
Who most stand in need of it!

It is conceivable that in the course of time the practice of inserting this petition to Jesus will become universal. In this event, it will be reckoned as a part of the recitation of the rosary, just as the Glory be to the Father is now.

Still another admonition to pray for others is found in the words of Mary: "Pray, pray, and make sacrifices for sinners. Many indeed are condemned to hell because no one prays for them, no one makes sacrifices for them."

4. Mary earnestly desired that the rosary be made a part of the daily program of Christian life. At every apparition at Fatima she urged the children to pray the rosary daily. That this daily rosary was to be recited in the home appears from the official examination of Jacinta, which took place after the last apparition, October, 1917. The pertinent questions are as follows:

"Did she (Mary) tell you that you should come to Cova da Iria again?"

"She told us before that it would be the last time, and today she said again that it was the last time."

"Did the Lady tell you nothing else?"

"Today she told us that we should pray the rosary every day in honor of the Queen of the Rosary."

"And did she tell you where it should be recited?"

"She didn't say where."

"Did she say it should be recited in church?"

"She never said that."

"Where would you rather pray it, at home or in the Cova da Iria?"

"In the Cova da Iria!"

"Why?"

"Just because!"

5. Mary also manifested her desire that the rosary become an essential part of the daily order of Christian life. This occurred in connection with the apparition made to Lucy on December 10, 1925. On this occasion Our Lady said: "My daughter, behold my heart which is encircled with thorns pressed upon it every moment by the cursing and ingratitude of ungrateful men. You at least seek to comfort me. On my part, I promise all those who on the first Saturday of five successive months receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, recite the rosary, and spend fifteen minutes keeping me company by meditating on the mysteries of the rosary with the intention of rendering satisfaction to me for these evils - all such I promise to assist in the hour of their death with the graces necessary for their salvation."

The Lady said "five Saturdays." Just why is it five? Why not nine Saturdays, as in the case of the nine Fridays devotion to the Sacred Heart? Then one could combine the Sacred Heart Fridays and the Marian Saturdays! The number five is the number of the rosary mysteries. Accordingly, each of the five Marian Saturdays for the individual, the family, the entire parish, is directed to one of the mysteries of the rosary - to be deeply pondered. Five Saturdays represent the rosary of five mysteries, and fifteen represent the entire rosary psalter of fifteen mysteries. The rosary mysteries are thoroughly studied and the devotion is kept alive within us by the means of the Five Saturdays.

This practice is not altogether new. At the famous shrine, Valle di

Pompeii, the fifteen rosary Saturdays are kept in order to awaken the inner spirit of the devotion among the faithful. The practice extends back to the seventeenth century, but blossomed forth anew at this shrine, where so many wonderful favors and graces have been granted in answer to the prayers to the Queen of the Rosary.

Summing up all that Mary made known about our devotion at Fatima, we note the following points:

1. In the rosary devotion the preferable form is that which assures meditation on the mysteries, their application to one's own life, and the prayer of petition to Mary for her intercession. Such is the case when the silent meditation on the mysteries, as Mary would have it, is distinct from vocal prayer.
2. The rosary leads us to Jesus through Mary.
3. The rosary is a prayer of petition.
4. The rosary should be an essential part of the Christian order of the day.
5. The devotion should lead to frequent and worthy reception of the sacraments.

In a few words, the rosary should become for the faithful what it was centuries ago. The ancient traditional prayer should be revived.



# The Rosary and Its Conformity with Faith

The panegyrist inflicts harm on any cause by thoughtless and excessive praise, and the uncritical adversary does the same. And the worst that can befall a cause is to have extreme enthusiasts on both sides - the thoughtless panegyrist on the one, and the uncritical opponent on the other. Such has been the fate of the rosary from the beginning, a fate from which it has never quite escaped. Some heedless enthusiasts present the rosary as a prayer which embraces all the important truths of the faith without exception. The indiscriminating opponent of the rosary goes to the other extreme and speaks of the mysteries of the rosary as a collection of very simple truths of faith which the Church prepared for those whom she despaired of giving a truly religious instruction.

The mysteries do not contain all the truths of the Christian faith, as can easily be proved. To cite just one instance, none refers to the institution of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or the Sacrament of the Altar. Nor were the mysteries placed in the rosary because of their simplicity. The very first one, which calls to mind the Incarnation of the Son of God, "Whom thou didst conceive of the Holy Ghost," is surely not simple. Only the words expressing the truth may be called simple.

If we examine the matter more closely, we find that the choice of mysteries was not at all arbitrary, but followed a certain pattern. Certain specific events in the earthly life of Jesus were introduced into the rosary, and while there was no arbitrary rejection, nevertheless certain specific objects were passed over. Not even the relatively greater or lesser importance of the mystery was the deciding factor. Those events were selected from the earthly life of Jesus in which Mary, His Mother, was present as the representative of the human race, divinely predestined to accompany Him and share His work. These events by their nature are divided into objects from the childhood of Jesus, the suffering and death of Jesus, and the glorification of Jesus, corresponding to the three rosaries - Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious.

Those events in the life of Jesus are excluded which do not concern

the cooperation of others, especially that of the Blessed Mother. For example, there is no mystery referring to the teaching office of Jesus Christ, such as: "Who didst announce the law of the New Testament in the Sermon on the Mount." Nor is there a mystery referring to the priestly office in the New Law in such words as: "Who didst institute the sacrifice of the New Testament at the Last Supper." Nor is there any mystery which calls to mind the decision of Jesus regarding the constitution of the Kingdom of God on earth, in words such as these: "Who didst appoint the Apostle Peter the Supreme Shepherd of the Church!"

The principle we just stated helps us understand how the rosary developed from within, in order to reach its completion. It was designed as a prayer to Jesus and Mary; a prayer to Jesus and Mary it became. Our forefathers, who took part in this common undertaking, preferred to call the rosary the "Psalter of Jesus and Mary." Alain de la Roche, to cite one example, was very much chagrined, not to say irritated, because the term rosary so prevailed over the old term, "Psalter of Jesus and Mary." Presumably he and others felt that the original designation "Psalter of Jesus and Mary" brought out the fundamental elements of the devotion especially well.

The rosary, however, is more than a well-rounded and complete unit. It has its place as a part of the Christian life of prayer, where it is bound up most intimately with faith in the Incarnation. In fact, it is a prayer that by a kind of inner necessity had to arise in the sphere of Christian piety. Human nature is such that, once a man or a group of men accepts the Incarnation of Christ in the womb of a virgin, their hearts tend to honor and glorify her who was raised above all other human beings while still retaining her humanity.

Cardinal Newman had a unique talent for teaching the development of ideas which take hold of an individual, or group, or which are grasped by an individual or by a group. In the following lines he speaks of the way in which the idea of the Incarnation of the Son of God made its way into the hearts of men:

Mary is exalted for the sake of Jesus. It was fitting that she, as being a creature, though the first of creatures, should have an office of ministration.

She, as others, came into the world to do a work, she had a mission to fulfill; her grace and glory are not for her own sake, but for her Maker's; and to her is committed the custody of the Incarnation, this is her appointed office - "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son: and His name shall be called Emmanuel." As she was once on earth, and was personally the guardian of her Divine Child, as she carried Him in her womb, folded Him in her embrace, and suckled Him at her breast, so now, and to the latest hour of the Church, do her glories and the devotion paid her proclaim and define the right faith concerning Him as God and man. Every church which is dedicated to her, every altar which is raised under her invocation, every image which represents her, every litany in her praise, every Hail Mary for her continual memory, does but remind us that there was One who, though He was all-blessed from all eternity, yet for the sake of sinners, "did not shrink from the Virgin's womb."

Cardinal Newman also had a wonderful practical understanding of the use of the rosary. Wilfred Ward tells us that the Cardinal had the rosary in his hands constantly.

The above explanation, with its reference to the Hail Mary, justifies the assumption that the Cardinal had the rosary in mind when he wrote these lines. The following passage from his meditation on Rosary Sunday shows that the assumption is correct:

Her very image is as a book in which we may read at a glance the mystery of the Incarnation, and the mercy of the Redemption; and withal her own gracious perfections also, who was made by her Divine Son the very type of humility, gentleness, fortitude, purity, patience, love.

Who can repeat her very name without finding in it a music which goes to the heart, and brings before him thoughts of God and Jesus Christ, and heaven above, and fills him with the desire of those graces

by which heaven is gained?

Hail then, great Mother of God, Queen of Saints,  
Royal Lady clothed with the sun and crowned with  
the stars of heaven, whom all generations have  
called and shall call blessed. We will take our part  
in praising thee in our own time and place with all  
the redeemed of Our Lord, and will exalt thee in  
the full assembly of the saints, and glorify thee in  
the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Evidence that this prayer directed to Mary the Mother of God's Son has its deepest roots in the heart of man is found in the Eastern Orthodox Church, in which a similar prayer sprang up in the eighth century. Constantinople had just been wrested from the grasp of the Arabs, and its liberation was attributed to Mary, just as much later the victory of Lepanto, in 1571, was attributed to her.

From earliest times a proper Marian doxology and a petition to Mary concluded most sections of the Canonical Hours recited in the Orthodox Church. Now such praises were directed to Mary to commemorate the liberation of the city. Though patterned on the doxologies of the Hours as recited from time immemorial, they were now so arranged as to present in their ensemble Mary's earthly life in a song of praise.

The hymn was called the *Akathistos*, because it was sung standing, the "Hymn without Sitting," to translate very crudely. If we translate the Greek word *chaire* by "hail," as we usually do, we have in the following a translation of that part of the hymn which corresponds to the first mystery of the Joyful rosary, "Whom thou, O Virgin, didst conceive of the Holy Ghost":

The Prince of Angels was sent from Heaven, to  
bring to the Mother of God the "Hail to thee!" And  
when he saw how You, O Lord, took Flesh at the  
word of an angel, he trembled in awe, and spoke to  
her:

Hail to thee, through whom joy springs up!

Hail to thee, through whom the curse is banished!

Hail to thee, who hast called back fallen Adam!

Hail to thee, who hast dried the tears of Eve!

Hail to thee, Lofty Tower, scarcely accessible to the senses of men!

Hail to thee, Deep Well, scarcely visible even to the eyes of angels!

Hail to thee, thou art the Throne of the King!

Hail to thee, because thou bearest Him who bears all!

Hail to thee, Lofty Brow, Mirror of the Sun!

Hail to thee, Womb in which God became man!

Hail to thee, through whom creation is renewed!

Hail to thee, through whom the Creator becomes a Child!

Hail to thee, Virgin Spouse!

These invocations with the constant repetition of the "Hail to thee," bear a striking resemblance to the old psalters and the old Marian greetings of the Middle Ages. These often began with the "Hail to thee." Even the number - there are 156 invocations in all - is about the same as the 150 invocations of the old psalter.

In the prayers of the laity the hymn *Akathistos* has about the same meaning as the rosary. This is evident from the *Tales of a Russian Pilgrim*, which manifests the interior life of prayer in the Orthodox Church more fully than any other work. The narrator tells of his youth, how he was faithful to the instruction of his grandfather and "read the praises of Mary every morning," and towards evening honored her by a thousand or more deep reverences. In this one statement we have the evidence not only for the existence of the

practice of this hymn as a daily prayer like the rosary, but also for the "corporeal prayer" similar to the Irish practices referred to previously.

The subsequent passages in the Tales are equally significant:

Although we had not the slightest idea of interior prayer, which is produced in the heart, and never made the least effort to obtain it, but merely recited words and abandoned ourselves irrationally to the reverences, in fact genuflected quite idiotically as a rule, nevertheless, the desire for prayer was present within us, and long, exterior, and incomprehensible prayer was not difficult for us. It was rather a delight. It seems therefore to be still true what a teacher once told me: "There is a secret prayer in man, of which he himself is not at all conscious. It is wrought by the soul unbeknown to him and incites everyone to pray as well as he knows how."

The writer of these lines has caught the inner sentiment of soul underlying the recitation of the responsive prayers whatever their form may be.

# The Rosary and Conformity to the Liturgy

The history of the origin of the rosary shows that the rosary developed into a perfect counterpart of the Canonical Hours. Therefore a special affinity with the liturgical prayers should not at all surprise us. Three characteristics, if we may particularize, account for such affinity.

1. *Liturgy and rosary agree in fundamentals.* The sources of life in all liturgical prayer are the Incarnation and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and His Ascension into heaven as the Mediator between heaven and earth. The selfsame mysteries are the center and focus of the rosary, Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious. Only the manner or approach is different. In the rosary the historic realities of our salvation are placed before the devout in a spiritual manner. In the liturgy Christ is mystically present and active through the mystical re-living of Incarnation, sacrificial death, and Ascension.

2. *The liturgical year corresponds basically with the rosary series of mysteries.* Though it often passes unnoticed, the liturgical year presents an obvious parallel to the rosary mysteries. The liturgy with its cycles of Sundays and feast days and the rosary with its series of mysteries present, along parallel lines, the life of Jesus Our Lord as a unit to the mind and memory of the faithful. The Joyful Mysteries correspond to the time from the Immaculate Conception to the beginning of Lent; the Sorrowful Mysteries correspond to Lent and Holy Week; the Glorious Mysteries to the time from Easter to the Assumption. Neither in the calendar nor in the rosary does the public life of Jesus occupy a very special place. The rosary is a kind of abridgment of the ecclesiastical year and recalls to the mind and memory of the faithful those historic realities on which the celebration of the liturgy rests.

3. *Manner and appeal are much alike.* Common to both is the comprehensive and graphic approach by way of pictures presenting the truths of faith, rather than the scientific exposition of these truths.

Once we realize how close is the bond between rosary and liturgy,

we shall not be surprised that the Church approves the praying of the rosary during Mass. She even expressly prescribes it, though with qualifications, for the month of October. It is to be recited during the Mass in this month, whenever the faithful cannot gather to recite it in the church in the evening.

There was valid reason for choosing the month of October for the recital of the rosary, as we shall see in the next section.

The encyclical on the liturgy, November, 1948, directs that in accordance with the traditional attitude of the Church it is proper for the faithful to follow the prayers of the liturgy, or meditate on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, or recite any other prayers suitable to the Holy Sacrifice while attending Mass. Meditation on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, in any instance, must include the mysteries of the rosary.



# The Rosary as Public Prayer

Throughout the centuries the Church was always very much interested in making the faithful a spiritual community. She seeks to attain this objective by transmitting to them the deposit of faith in forms intelligible to all, forms that all can transmit to others. Thus the truths can be passed on from one generation to another. Cardinal Newman conceived of these efforts of the Church as a primary religious education to which everyone, whether from the higher or the lower strata of society, should submit.

Among the means to attain this end, the foremost is instruction in the simplest terms teaching the truths of salvation. One of the first concerns of the Church is to prepare formulas intelligible to all and present them to all, educated and uneducated, and maintaining thereby a spiritual bond among them. The catechism is a crystallization of this concern of the Church.

From very ancient times the Church placed the celebration of the liturgy alongside catechetical teaching as a means of instructing the faithful, without any exception, in the divine truths. The catecheses of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem show to what extent the Church looks upon the liturgy as a source of instruction. Saint Cyril's first sermon to the newly enlightened, the newly baptized, begins with the thought that seeing leads to faith more readily than hearing. An explanation of the ceremonies of Baptism, which has just been administered to his hearers, follows immediately. Celebration of the liturgy embraces instruction in the faith for the simple reason that it presents the revealed truth concretely and touches the spirit and heart of man. Introduction into the Sacred Eucharistic mysteries has been an essential part of the Church's religious instruction from time immemorial. It is surely an overstatement to say that the Mass has been discovered through the liturgical movement of recent years. We can only say that since books can now be purchased cheaply, and general education has raised the cultural level of the masses, a new way has been opened for the instruction of the faithful in an appreciation of the liturgical prayers of the Holy Sacrifice.

In addition to the catechetical instruction and the celebration of the liturgy, there is a third way to secure the common treasure of the divine truths and spiritual unity for the faithful. It is the practice of public prayer. Public prayers are composed in the vernacular, learned by everybody, used by the faithful among themselves, and recited in the church as community prayer.

The old norm expressed in the words *lex orandi, lex credendi*, and the converse *lex credendi, lex orandi*, "the rule of prayer is the rule of faith," and "the rule of faith is the rule of prayer," is valid in its ancient sense, that not only the Latin liturgical prayer, but all public prayer is a standard of faith. The conviction of the Church is contained in the law requiring that all public prayers be submitted to ecclesiastical approval. By this regulation the Church determines what really constitutes public prayer.

The desire of the Church to build a treasury of prayers as the common possession of the faithful accounts for the apt choice of short indulgenced prayers universally intelligible. Undoubtedly, public prayer is not appreciated as it should be. In the last decades, with their overemphasis of personal and individual rights, public prayer suffered a great loss of prestige. This explains why the turn from the individualistic attitude has, up until now, merely led to a renewal of appreciation of the strictly limited liturgical prayers, the texts in the Latin language, but not to greater esteem for the public prayer approved by the Church in the various popular tongues.

The Church herself has not at any time relaxed in her esteem for public prayer. But she has learned from her vast experience in past centuries that a prayer will not continue, as a public prayer among the people, to be passed on from generation to generation merely because it avails for religious instruction, but only if it is prayed regularly, that is, at stated times in the church after the manner of the liturgical prayer.

Prayer takes on something of the sense of the Church and breathes forth her spirit whenever it is recited in Christian homes. In the minds of the faithful it becomes a special prayer in so far as they behold in it a prayer of the Mother, the Church herself. The faithful, through her blessings and consecrations, bear their own life into the Church, and in public prayers they in some measure bring the

Church into their homes. If we study the Church's attitude towards public prayer, we cannot fail to notice her special concern regarding it. Certain time-tried public prayers of long-standing tradition she seeks to spread systematically and maintain in all their validity.

This class of public prayer, to which among others the Stations of the Cross and the litanies approved for the Universal Church belong, includes the rosary. In fact, it is indisputably the first and foremost of them all. This preeminence is shown by the statements of the Pontiff Leo XIII, who deals specifically with the rosary, and his successors, who recur to the same theme. Any judgment of the Church's instructions on the prayer of the faithful must be made with a basic understanding of the Church's broad and comprehensive attitude. An over-rigid and legalistic view of the directives, looking upon the recommendations as laws, can result only in the loss of the true sense and objective of her instructions. Interpreting the recommendations of the dialogue Mass as a restriction on the recitation of the rosary during the Mass is an instance of such an erroneous extreme. The evil resulting, unfortunately, may not appear until long afterwards, or in many instances only when it can no longer be remedied.

When the Church prescribes the rosary for the month of October under certain conditions, she also approves of the prayer alongside the liturgical prayer for the rest of the year. There is only one dividing line of the faithful in the mind of the Church when there is a question of prayer: the line between those who pray and those who do not pray. The latter are objects of her fearsome care, the former are her great joy.

Participation by the faithful in offering the Holy Sacrifice is founded first of all in the inner assimilation of their own dispositions with the sacrificial will of Jesus Christ. Now, since the sacrificial will of Christ is the ultimate motive force of all the mysteries of the three rosaries, there is an intimate relationship between the devout recitation of the rosary and the inner attention at Holy Mass. Surely, if the rosary is not recited well, this bond does not exist. But the very same is true of the prayers of the Mass if inner dispositions are lacking.

# **Voices of the Times**

## **Spiritual Approaches to the Rosary in the Religious Life of Our Time**

The origin of the rosary shows that it is a devotion composed of varied elements welded into a unity. In consequence there are many spiritual approaches to it. Just as every entrance opens into the house as a whole, so any element in the rosary can lead us to a right understanding and proper recital of the entire prayer. The greater complications that characterize our age open many avenues of approach to the rosary.

### **The Rosary and the Bible**

The religious life of the present age is marked above all by a return to the Sacred Scriptures, more particularly to the Gospels. To the faithful who are influenced by this movement, the rosary offers a series of events from the life of Jesus and the life of His Mother, which they can ponder prayerfully and take as a model for their own life. Does not the Apostle say that the reading of the Scripture is useful to instruct and to edify?

### **The Rosary and the Doctrine of the Mystical Body**

Our age has also come to a new understanding of the life of the mystical body of Christ, of the mystic life of all the faithful in Christ. This unity in the spiritual life is the heavenly counterpart to that earthly unity of life which mankind is now experiencing in unspeakable pain and estimating at its true value. The rosary unites the faithful with Jesus the Saviour and His Mother, and with one another as members of one family.

### **The Rosary and the War**

A third approach to the rosary was a result of the years of war. The approach was through a rain of steel, blazing fires, and disruption of communications. Nearly all Catholic soldiers who spent some time at daily prayer began with the recital of the rosary, or if they attempted other forms of prayer, finally came to prefer the rosary.

It would not be difficult nor without profit to gather the evidence for such a statement from letters and oral reports of the soldiers of all nations. The summary of excerpts from the letters and reports would fill a volume. It would reveal the power of the rosary, which, unlike any other prayer, could keep open the view into a higher and more beautiful world in hours of darkness and solitude.

## **Consecration of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

The rosary is intimately bound up with the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. There is an external connection between the two, since the Pope at the conclusion of the act of consecration, invoked Mary as the "Queen of the Rosary." The interior bond lies in the fact that the consecration, in order to be effective, must lead to the veneration of the Heart of Mary. The meaning of the devotion to Mary's Heart is brought out very clearly by explaining the mysteries of the rosary.

The consecration of the world to Mary is not so intimately and exclusively joined with the apparitions at Fatima as is often supposed. In the year 1914, and therefore before the apparitions took place, the Pope asked the Eucharistic Congress at Lourdes to consecrate the world to Mary. Subsequently many congresses have renewed such acts of consecration. In this instance we must hold to the same principle as in other cases of private revelation. The Church in pronouncing on them is first of all concerned with the devotion which she seeks to promote. Private revelations are only the occasion for the pronouncement made at any particular time. Ultimately private revelations can have no greater force in the life of the Church, guided as she is by the divinely established doctrinal magisterium. Were we to grant them a validity beyond the bounds just indicated, they would ultimately and finally mean nothing less than a new revelation universally binding. Actual public revelations ended with the death of the apostles. E. Michael says quite appositely: "The Church has never intervened in favor of any private revelation as the infallible teacher of the truths of salvation. She will never lend any such revelation her divine authority, for the simple reason that she cannot."

## **The Rosary and the Restlessness of Our Age**

One more approach, a final one, must be considered: the rosary is a counterpoise to the current haste and unrest. Modern life makes so many demands on our physical energies that a measure of open-air life and outdoor activity becomes imperative for health and vigor. Such need is universally recognized. It even assumes a legal and formal status in the contract of the employees granted a "vacation with pay." But a spiritual atmosphere, isolated from the world's hurry and conducive to the soul's health and vigor, is much more important. Such an atmosphere is provided by the rosary. It links man with another world upon which this world can have no influence, another world from which an influence can be exercised on the one who prays here in this world.

Present-day life burdens and molests every man with countless impressions. The rosary presents pictures from another world. Like a motion picture film, flash following flash, the prayers follow in orderly sequence - the Lord's Prayer, the salutations and petitions to Mary. On this film at regular intervals the flashes show events from the life of Jesus and Mary, one following the other - in which the life of Mary is a part of the life of Jesus, and the life of Jesus is the whole of Mary's life.

The prayer with meditation affects the soul as ultraviolet rays affect the body. As one submits to the health-giving influence of these invisible rays, he is not very active exteriorly. One merely submits to the influence. Similarly, praying the rosary requires no extraordinary exertion; in fact, many hold it in low esteem precisely for this reason. As in submitting to the rays, one must only sacrifice the required time; the wholesome effect is spontaneous.

Here we have the basis for the rosary as a modern prayer, as the devotion which frees man from the hectic world about him by means of pictures and gives the soul a chance to be with itself alone for awhile. All this harmonizes with what is happening of late in England and America. Precisely in these countries whose life rhythm is the hum of industry, the rosary is gaining in popular appreciation. As to England the facts appear in the *Splendor of the Rosary* by Maisie Ward (1945). She cites an example of a parish in London in which no less than 500 non-Catholics recite the rosary daily. The merit of the book, however, goes beyond the

presentation of such individual facts. Maisie Ward has been active for nearly a generation in the service of the Catholic Evidence Guild. She has had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the prejudice against the rosary found among Catholics and non-Catholics and to discover the means to dissipate it and promote the devotion. From her experience she shows how the very features of the rosary which are misunderstood and criticized follow certain psychological laws. The rosary as vocal prayer has occasioned difficulty. The counting of the Our Fathers and the Hail Marys has met with criticism. It has been compared with the Tibetan prayer-wheel and placed on a par with it. Maisie Ward shows that vocal prayer and the counting of the Hail Marys produce a spiritual disposition for the meditating mind, thereby guarding against distractions from without.

"The very holding, the very slipping through the fingers of the beads, can be a powerful counter-distraction." Bodily repose is easier. And the vocal repetition of the Hail Marys also makes the concentration on the objects of meditation easier. The author recalls familiar experiences from daily life. Many men cannot think without puffing at a cigarette or without doodling with a pencil or making some other movement of the kind. There are as many women who think best while knitting. External mechanical movements hedge us in against distractions.

In a similar vein Professor Howley in his work on mysticism recommends the rosary to his readers. He explains that as the beads slip through the fingers the spirit is freed of its nervous tension and there is greater potentiality for recollection in prayer and particularly for the reflection on the mysteries.

As in England so in America the rosary is recommended as a devotion which is suitable to modern life, in so far as it is an inner counterpoise to external unrest. This is the viewpoint stressed in the effort to popularize the devotion. The method admirably suits the American mode of life. The leading figure in the promotion is Father Patrick Peyton. The priest's method is revealed by the following incident.

Towards the end of the war a group of famous film stars made a trip to Europe to put on plays for the entertainment of the men in the

service. As the plane was flown back to England with the actors, it happened that the pilot lost his bearings completely. The passengers were not slow to realize their danger. Then the boxer Billy Conn invited the whole group to recite the rosary with him. Meanwhile he made a promise to erect a statue to the Mother of God in his old school in Pittsburgh if the plane should be landed safely. Just as the group was finishing the recitation, the pilot got his bearings again and could speed on to his destination and land the plane.

When Father Peyton heard of this incident he made up his mind to attempt to have Billy Conn and other film stars cooperate on a radio program for the promotion of the rosary. Those with whom he discussed the new project simply laughed at him and told him the people of Hollywood would turn him down with a great deal of amusement. Nevertheless, when Father Peyton came back from Hollywood, he had a list of twenty-two Catholic and six non-Catholic film stars who were ready to help. The upshot of all this was the Family Rosary Hour on the radio, with world-famous stars taking part in nationwide broadcasts.

That the repetition prayers, like the rosary, suit the natural disposition of men for whom knowledge is progressive and emotion climactic, is shown by a survey of the non-Christian lands of the world. The great religions of Asia have prayers of this kind and manifest through them deep religious feeling. The inner structure of the formulas used in these prayers is very illuminating. One widely used and much loved in East Asia may be literally translated as follows: "O thou gem in the lotus blossom!" In this prayer there is no boundary between God, who is the gem, and the world as a whole, which figuratively is the lotus blossom. The repetition prayer of the Mohammedans is composed of invocations of God, which emphasize individual divine attributes. In their prayers the distinction between a personal God, who has created all things, and man, who is made by Him, stands out clearly. The rosary prayer, the repetition prayer of the Christian faith, is built up in its entirety on divine revelation, on the intervention of the personal, indeed, of the triune God, in the exterior course of world history. The more profound and deeply entrenched the religion, the more richly laden are the repetition prayers, made up as they are of a great variety of individual thoughts. The rosary, repeating the formulas of the



Christian faith, is therefore the most beautiful prayer of all.

# Appendices

# Comments

The author cites the following as of special importance for the history of the rosary:

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## **Spiritual Sources of the Rosary**

There are two fundamental facts which are of decisive importance in the history of the rosary:

1. The prayers of which the rosary is made up are all without exception taken over from the liturgical prayers said in choir and form a well-ordered counterpart to them.
2. In the course of its development the rosary passed through various stages. First, it was counted as a prayer, then it became a prayer with reverences and other bodily acts, then a "read" prayer, then a "picture" prayer. Only after it had gone through all these stages, did it become a community prayer which combined vocal prayer and meditation.

Several centuries of effort were involved in the composition and development of these texts. It would be a grave mistake to view this effort as entirely a one-sided affair, as though the priest simply set out to prepare a change of prayers for the use of the laity. The simple folk rejoiced to have the sacred texts in forms which they could grasp and appreciate; the priests were proud and happy about it. Without this spirit of sincere appreciation and cooperation it would have been impossible to create so many new forms of prayer.

### **The Liturgical Prayers of the Church. Their Counterpart in the Language of the People. Principal Facts**

If in the centuries of the early Middle Ages liturgical texts were first turned into Latin verse, popular in fancy and sentiment, this meant that there was a bond with the people to the extent of some acquaintance with Latin on the part of the upper classes of the laity. That such verse met with special favor in German-speaking lands was not due to chance. In the lands of the Romance languages it was always possible for the ordinary laity to grasp at least something of the sense of the liturgical prayer because of the affinity of the Latin with their own language. Where there was no such affinity, as in the countries of the Germanic tongues, there would be a much keener sense of the need for translations into the popular idiom.

## **The Biblical Psalter in Liturgical Prayer and Its Fourfold Counterpart in the Prayers of the People.**

1. In the family of the well-known writer, John Svenson, whose ancestry can be traced back to 800, an old counting string is still preserved, which was used to keep account of the Our Fathers. It dates back to 900.
2. The writer had already completed the manuscript of this work and sent it to his publishers when there arrived the first post-war book in English to come into his hands, *The Splendor of the Rosary*, by Maisie Ward. The English work proved very valuable, despite its late arrival. The writer's use of the book was rendered all the easier because the two works, both completed during the war, agreed in general structure and in many details.
3. Corporeal prayer. The longest to survive was the corporeal prayer connected with the recitation of the *Salve Regina*. As late as the end of the fifteenth century the prayer book, *Her Selen Trost* has the following instruction: "At the singing of the words, *Salve Regina*, one should fall to his knees; at the words, 'Most gracious advocate,' one should fall to his knees and remain kneeling until the words, 'O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary,' then arise." (Beissel, Vol. II)

The prayers said while kneeling, if accompanied by further movement, can be classed with "corporeal prayers." The words, "visit a shrine of pilgrimage on one's knees," suggests this corporeal prayer, which was widely practiced in former times. In times of great tragedy such practices, which are still in use here and there, may suddenly emerge from hiding and be repeated publicly. They will serve as a barometer registering the intensity of the distress.

An instance is recorded from the year 1936. In the Fall, 400 men joined in a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Mother of God at Trens. They made the way from the railroad to the church on their knees, moving forward in this position and reciting the rosary, a journey of half an hour. This prayer was a manifestation of popular foreboding preceding the years of distress which followed.

4. The Latin text of the prayer for good weather reads: *Aue Maria Christus natus, Christus passus, Christus resurgens, Christus*

regnans, Christus imperans, O rex gloriae, ueni cum pace. Pater noster. Ave Maria.

5. In the legend of Saint Peter Damian it is mentioned that the Hail Mary which the cleric sings is made up of an "angelic" and an "evangelical" verse. The "angelic" verse means the greeting of the angel; the "evangelical" verse is the greeting of Mary's cousin Elizabeth, which was not uttered by an angel, but is a part of the Gospel and can therefore be called "evangelical."

It is worth noting that in the Little Office we do not have the greeting of the angel as the solemn *invitatorium* on the one hand, and the salutation of Elizabeth as an antiphon on the other. The two are first joined into one prayer, and then divided into two equal parts, the first of which is the solemn *invitatorium*, "Hail, full of grace," and the second, "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," an antiphon. From this it is evident that when the Little Office and the Offertory of the Fourth Sunday of Advent were composed, the Angelic Salutation was looked upon as a unit and then divided. Under these circumstances it was quite natural to use the two parts as an invocation of Mary outside the Little Office.

### **Combination of the Four Psalters into the Rosary Psaltar**

Following are a few of the old prayer forms of the rosary. Alongside the rosary with the fifteen mysteries they have been handed down from generation to generation as traditional forms of prayer until recent times.

The Spaniard, Navarre (died 1589), a relative of Saint Francis Xavier, composed a rosary prayer which referred to all the angels and saints. He inserted this prayer after each decade: "May all angels and archangels praise thee, O Glorious Mary, Virgin and Mother, ten thousand times!" After the first decade it was "ten thousand times"; after the second decade "twenty thousand times"; after the third decade, "thirty thousand times"; finally after the last decade, "one hundred thousand times."

Merlo Horstius in his *Paradise of the Soul*, 1689, recommends a similar form of prayer. One of the prayer forms has survived among

the people, which is very much like this rosary. Old people, e.g., seamstresses at work, shepherds alone in the mountains, or all those who while they work cannot carry a rosary about and count the beads, often pray in the following manner: "ten thousand times Hail Mary, etc." "twenty thousand times Hail Mary, etc." until they reach the "hundred thousand" and the Glory be to the Father.

In the rosary booklet of Nakatenus, which appeared in 1560, mention is made of the so-called *Psalterium*, the little psalter, consisting of three Our Fathers, fifteen Hail Marys, and fifteen mysteries. The latter are attached singly to the fifteen Hail Marys. This rosary is still in use among the people, but it is not called *Psalterium* any more, but "Little Psalter" or the "Wood Rosary," because of its use among woodmen.

The most popular of these forms is the rosary in honor of the five wounds of Christ. But it lost its name and, once the name was forgotten, the connection between the five Our Fathers and the five wounds of Christ was soon lost. The five Our Fathers are still prayed on various occasions, e.g., at visits of condolence to the homes of the deceased or at the ceremony of incensation on the vigils of Christmas, New Year's, and Epiphany. We might go so far as to say that the faithful, when they don't know what just prayer they should recite, pray the five Our Fathers in honor of the five wounds.

That this rosary is really ancient is evident from the name still used in some sections. The term (in these places) is not as we might expect "the five" (Our Fathers), but the "fiver." The word rosary has been dropped. The expression is simply "to pray the fiver." The term, "the five Our Fathers," in the sense of a rosary in honor of the five wounds, is found already in a letter of the Duchess Sidonia to her son George of Saxony. She advises him to say a rosary daily. If he does not find the time to recite the long one with the fifty Hail Marys, he should say the short psalter, the little psalter with fifteen Hail Marys, and if this seems too much, at least the five Our Fathers and Hail Marys. She writes in the following vein: "Dearest little son, do not neglect the rosary nor the fifteen Ave Marias, at least not the five p(ater) n(oster) and as many Ave Marias." (Wilhelm Schmitz, S.J. Das Rosenkranzgebet, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1903)

**The Rosary Approved as One of the Devotions of the Universal**

## **Church. Founding of the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary by Alain de la Roche at Douai in 1470.**

The practice of preaching about the rosary on the monthly Sunday is bound up with the old custom of celebrating these Sundays as Marian Sundays by reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. In the flourishing period of the rosary confraternity the faithful were spiritually formed by this practice. Every member on entry, pledged himself to a monthly reception of the sacraments. In this manner a very considerable portion of the faithful, including the men, were led to receive the sacraments every month. The ideal of popular care of souls was approached: the reception of the sacraments with a degree of frequency by nearly all the faithful. The numbers receiving the sacrament of Penance became so considerable that it was found necessary to increase the number of priests hearing confessions.

The numbers approaching the sacraments and joining the procession which was held on this Sunday probably account for the eventual dropping of the sermon. Even in the present century there is some evidence of this one-time flourishing practice in the skipping of the sermon on the monthly Sunday. Moreover, the monthly Sunday as Communion Sunday derives its significance from those days. To seek to rob the monthly Sunday of its importance by depriving it of its liturgical justification is opposed to the whole spirit of the popular care of souls and therefore to the mind of the Church.

## **An Example of the Rosary as it was "Read" in Olden Times**

The place where the "Golden Rosary" or the "Crown of Christ" is still "read" every Sunday is Schrocken. It lies in the Alps, 1272 meters above sea level. According to popular tradition the custom arose because of a vow made by the inhabitants at the time of the great plague during the Thirty Years' War. The mysteries were printed for the first time by permission of the episcopal Vicariate-General of Feldkirch in 1841. Many soldiers of the town took the four-page pamphlet with them when they were drafted for war in order to be able to "read" the rosary when far from home.

## **The Rosary Takes on the Form of Vocal Common Prayer**



1. If we compare the form and manner in which the truths of the faith were brought to the people by means of pictures at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern age with what is now happening in the new religious literature, e.g., in the new French catechism and the new French missal of Abbe Godin, we see how the general tendency is away from the one-sidedness of the Enlightenment back to the appreciation and continuation of the traditional.

2. In the sixteenth century a rosary with only fifteen mysteries took the place of the one with 150 mysteries. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were indications of a reversal to a greater number of points of meditation. Certain individual enthusiasts for the devotion to the rosary set forth ten points of meditation, one for each Hail Mary, for every one of the mysteries. The result was a rosary of fifteen mysteries and 150 points of meditation. The best-known work of this kind was the rosary book of the Provost Walter of Innichen. We must also mention the book published by the Confraternity of Saint Joseph (1905): *The Rosary Prayer in Its Beauty and Merit*.

3. The song in praise of the rosary composed by Master Michael is one of the most important poetic works of medieval Danish literature. Selections from it are still found in Danish school texts.

4. The thought that vocal prayer builds a kind of wall around the spirit of one meditating and shields him from distraction is given a practical and up-to-date expression in Maisie Ward's book, *The Splendor of the Rosary*.

### **Development of the Rosary as a Balanced Alternating Prayer**

The indulgences attached to the rosary can be gained by both methods of recitation, repeating the mystery within each Hail Mary or merely stating it once and then reciting the decade. For the proper direction of the people, it is desirable, however, to follow one method uniformly in any territory.

Especial stress must nevertheless be laid on praying the rosary properly and beautifully everywhere. Many of the prejudices against the rosary do not arise from the rosary itself but from the

slovenly manner in which it is recited in church. No one will deny that it is often not recited as properly as could be desired. Nor should any one deny that a prayer should be judged on its own merits, not by its bad recitation. No one would surely condemn a melody of Mozart's or any other famous composer as worthless or ugly because it was badly sung.

### **Insertion of the Doxology, "Glory Be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."**

1. The lay Brothers in the Cistercian Order when out on the farms had to recite the vigils and the Hours at the same time as the monks in the monastery. The leader began with the words, "O Lord, open my lips!" The others responded, "And my mouth shall pronounce Thy praise!" These words were repeated three times. All the Brothers to bow in unison at the singing of them. Then they all prayed an Our Father in common instead of the Latin Psalm. The Our Father concluded with a Glory be to the Father, after the manner of the recitation of the Psalms. All bowed down to the earth at the words of the Gloria. Twenty Our Fathers were said instead of the Psalms for Matins, ten for Lauds, ten for Vespers, and five for each of the Little Hours. The present practice of concluding the decades of the rosary with the Gloria may be derived from this practice of substituting Our Fathers for the choir recitation of the Psalms. To trace it back to the lay Brothers' recitation of the Our Fathers with Glory be to the Father might be difficult, however.

2. The history of the Gloria shows that there is a basic possibility for further additions to be made to the rosary in future times. How such development might take place is suggested by the growing practice of repeating at each decade the prayer which Mary taught the children at Fatima, beginning with, "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins!" Some Catholics look upon any such change as altogether inadmissible, but others wish to have the Pope prescribe the addition of the prayer to the rosary. The Church occupies a neutral position in the matter, and such is her traditional attitude.

3. England may be the only country today in which the rosary is chanted like the Psalms for public devotions and particularly in processions. In her book, *The Splendor of the Rosary*, Maisie Ward says that this devotion meets with great favor in some places. We

find such a melody for the chanting of the Psalms in Stephen Beissel, S.J., *Geschichte der Verehrung Marias im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*.

In a pilgrimage in south Tyrol made by the people of Ahmtal to the shrine of the Mother of God at Ehrnburg, the rosary was recited in four voices. In this practice, which continued until recent times, we have a species of choral recitation or chant.

**The Voice of the Saints. The Rosary in its Classical Period: Instruction of the Faithful. The Writings of Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716)**

Available in English is a small work, *The Holy Rosary As It Should Be Said*, according to Blessed (now Saint) Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort. The little book is published by the Montfort Missionaries, Abbey House, Hants, England. The references to Fatima and the words of Our Lady are to the work of Luigi da Fonseca. The works on Fatima in English are legion. We suggest the "intentions" are taken from a work in German, also by Father Kilian Baumer, *Krankenliturgie, Trostquellen der heiligen Kirche* (Liturgy for the Sick, Sources of Consolation in the Church), publisher not given.

Some of the modern writers, such as Father Kilian Baumer in the work just mentioned and provost Walter of Innichen are reversing the procedure of Alberto da Castello, O.P. Da Castello made the mysteries belonging to the ten Hail Marys into ten parts of the one main mystery for the decade. These writers develop ten points from the main mystery of the decade. These points of meditation can be considered ten parts of the one mystery. The ten points for meditation on the first mystery are the following:

1. Mary prays for the coming of the Redeemer.
2. The angel is sent by God.
3. Hail, full of grace.
4. Mary is terrified.
5. Fear not. .. Behold, you shall conceive.

6. How can this be?
7. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.
8. Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.
9. And the word was made flesh.
10. Mary's thanksgiving prayer for the Incarnation.

### **The Voice of the Popes. Papal Encyclicals from 1883 to 1942**

The encyclicals on the rosary stress various features of the rosary, at one time emphasizing one characteristic, then turning to another. Interesting in retrospect are the remarks of Leo XIII about the loss of religious spirit and the flight from the land. Many in the past have flocked to the city because of great need, but the motives have not always been worthy.

### **The Language of Art. Mary Represented as Queen of the Rosary in Pictures. Mary with the Infant. Our Lady of Fatima, 1917.**

The pictures showing the Mother of God with the Infant on a throne handing rosaries to Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine of Siena, seen on the rosary altars, still retain their significance even though the rosary antedates Saint Dominic. The devotion to the rosary was fostered for centuries by the Order of Saint Dominic, and the Confraternity of the Rosary is still entrusted to it.

### **The Language of Mysticism. The Message of Fatima**

1. That the practice of the Marian Saturdays was also known north of the Alps before the time of Leo XIII is shown in the following remarks in the work of Beringer on indulgences: According to an old custom the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary dedicated to the Mother of God, Queen of the Holy Rosary, fifteen successive Saturdays before the Feast of the Rosary or throughout some other part of the year. They sought to receive the holy sacraments on these days and perform other works of piety in honor of the fifteen mysteries of the rosary.

Certain works in German had special devotions for these Saturdays,

proof that the devotion of the fifteen Saturdays was known and appreciated.

2. The representation of Mary as Queen of the Rosary corresponding to the apparitions at Fatima was in some measure prepared by the apparition of the Mother of God at Lourdes. The Blessed Virgin appeared with a rosary, bearing it on her arm, and teaching Bernadette to recite the prayer. She did not herself pray it, but counted the beads as Bernadette passed from Hail Mary to Hail Mary. Accordingly, the basilica at Lourdes is also a shrine of the holy rosary. The rosary prayer corresponds to the Fatima apparitions much more specifically, and hence we may with justification speak of a new kind of representation of the Mother of God as Queen of the Rosary, arising at this time.

### **The Rosary and Its Conformity with Faith.**

The statements of Cardinal Newman about the two elements found alongside each other in the devotion to Mary are very important. We can look upon Mary as the Mother of Jesus, as it were from God's viewpoint. She is united with the Saviour but is a creature as are other men. But we can also look up to her from the earth - then she is the most exalted of mortals and can be extolled with words of highest praise. Cardinal Newman does not always agree with Father Faber in his general attitude; in the matter of devotion to Mary he expressly relies on the utterances of his fellow Oratorian.

### **The Rosary and Conformity to the Liturgy**

In past centuries the praying of the rosary during Mass was recommended by the preachers in the parish missions. Presumably the missionaries realized that the practice of the rosary could be passed on as a living tradition from generation to generation only if it was regularly recited by the faithful in common.

### **The Rosary as Public Prayer**

1. An indication of the mind of the Church favoring the encouragement and retention of the rosary as public prayer is found in her official granting of indulgences: a plenary indulgence is granted to those who recite the rosary before the Blessed Sacrament

in the church. The Church wishes to encourage by means of this indulgence the prayer of the groups assembled in church rather than the recitation by the individual.

2. A little story from the life of Pier Giorgio Frassati illustrates the fact that the rosary is a public prayer of the Church. One day as he was leaving church with the rosary still in his hands, he met a friend who was quite of a different mind. "Now, Giorgio, have you become a praying Religious Brother?" he remarked. "No," replied Giorgio, with a laugh, "I have remained a Christian."

### **Voices of the Times. Spiritual Approaches to the Rosary in the Religious Life of Our Times**

What the psychologist says in technical language about the rosary we find in non-technical language in the words of Cardinal Faulhaber, from his own experience: "When my head is heavy and I am exhausted from the day's endless tasks, from the correspondence about every conceivable need, from the administration of a vast diocese, from the multiplicity of callers - and then I recite the rosary with one of the members of the household in the chapel, the view of the ever ancient and ever new mysteries of our Redemption induces repose of spirit after the heat and hurry of the day."

# About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *The Rosary: Its History and Meaning*, by Father Franz Michel Willam, 1947. The edition used was translated by Father Edwin Kaiser, C.P.P.S. and published by Benziger Brothers, New York, 1953. A translation of "Geschichte und Gebetsschule des Rosenkranzes," originally published by Verlag Herder, Vienna, 1948.

It has the Nihil Obstat of Father John M A Fearn, S.T.D., Censor Librorum; and the Imprimatur of Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman, Archbishop of New York, New York, 17 November 1952.

The cover image is a group of rosaries of different sizes. They were in the church of Mary of the Assumption in Bogenberg, Lower Bavaria, Germany, were photographed on 20 July 2010 by Wolfgang Sauber, and the image swiped from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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